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TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD IN RELIGION

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TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD IN RELIGION

SIX LECTURES DELIVERED AT CAMBRIDGE TO UNDERGRADUATES IN THE LENT TERM, 1906

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"Our faith cometh of the natural love of the soul, and of the clear light of our reason, and of the steadfast mind which we have of God in our first making."

JULIAN OF NORWICH.

PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

THESE Lectures were given at the invitation of a Committee, composed of resident graduates in the University of Cambridge. This Committee, though quite unofficial, contained representatives of all schools of thought in the Church, and some Nonconformists. Its members were of opinion that, in view of the wide interest taken by Cambridge undergraduates in religious questions and discussions thereupon, a course of constructive lectures on the basis of the Christian Faith might be advantageous.

The Committee did me the honour to ask me to give such a course. The Lectures were delivered in the Victoria Assembly Rooms, on Wednesday afternoons, in the Lent Term, 1906, and were attended by from 250 to 300 persons, of whom about four-fifths were undergraduates. The Lectures are published, by request, just as they were delivered, with a few verbal changes.

W. R. I.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

In this Edition a few sentences, chiefly in Lecture IV., have been recast. My critics, who have dealt very kindly with my little book, have recognised my motive in taking nothing for granted, and have not misunderstood my frank admission of unsolved difficulties. But a few expressions seemed to me to need modification, and I have been glad of the opportunity to rewrite them. The changes are few and slight, for I have reason to believe that the Lectures were found helpful by many who heard them, or have since read them. The Cambridge undergraduate is in earnest about his religion, and is ready to listen to any thoughtful teacher who will address him as a grown man, and with absolute candour. *Summa est ut moveamur ipsi.* We can help our younger friends best by sharing with them our own deepest convictions. Other sides of the truth can be taught by other men.

W. R. I.

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TRUTH AND FALSEHOOD IN RELIGION

I.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

It is a profound saying of Aristotle that the occasions of strife are small but its causes great. We have need to remind ourselves of this when we are tempted to throw aside with disgust the newspaper controversies about religion which have been so noisy in the last few years. Even when, as is usually the case, the arguments used prove nothing except the invincible prejudices and bad temper of the writers, prejudice and ill temper are facts which have to be accounted for, and they are sometimes based on an inarticulate logic which has some of the cogency of natural instinct. Just now the logic seems to be more inarticulate, the fighting more random than usual, because some of the old weapons, both

of attack and defence, are almost useless, and the field of combat is so confused that it is difficult to distinguish friend from foe. It is a perplexing age for those who need guidance. The simple expedient of obeying orders, of believing on authority, is difficult when there is so much conflict of opinion. For if authority A tells me to believe, and authority B tells me not to believe, and I decide to follow A without listening to B, that is only the same as saying, "I will believe because I choose," which is not a dignified position for an intelligent or even for an honest man. I hope we shall soon have a new apologetic, which may satisfy the needs of the rising generation as Butler's *Analogy* seems to have satisfied the very different religious needs of Georgian England, and as Paley's *Evidences*, strange to say, seems to have satisfied those of a later period. But we have not got it yet, and I do not think that I should help you much by following the lines of any standard theological treatise, in the lectures which I am to have the honour and pleasure of delivering here. I think I shall have a better chance of interesting some of you if I follow my own bent, and tell you how some of our most pressing problems appear to me. I am not so presumptuous as to hope to contribute anything of permanent value to the great debate which will continue its leisurely course centuries after we are dead. The last

word on this as on other subjects may be left to "the last man," who would seem to be the proper person to speak it. I shall be well content if I can give you something to think about, and if I can convince those of you who are in perplexity about their beliefs—and this is the class whose interest I am most anxious to enlist and retain—that there is, at least, nothing to be ashamed of, morally or intellectually, in loyalty to the old Church and the old faith.

There are some of my hearers, I have no doubt, who would prefer a discussion on more conventional lines. Men's minds are differently constituted; and there are still many who do not share the feeling of disappointment with our semi-official apologetics which keeps back others from active sympathy with the Church. But the wants of this class are provided for in standard books; and though they will find something wanting in these lectures, possibly they may profit by hearing an attempt to put old truths in what is to them a new light.

There are in each generation certain dominant ideas which tend to become a sort of framework in which all experience is set, and to furnish a dialect in which all thoughts are expressed. Anyone who wishes to influence his generation must accept this fact; he must consider how the permanent truths of religion

can best be arranged in this framework, and expressed in this dialect. Onesidedness cannot be avoided when the subject embraces the whole of human life; but each generation may contribute something to the knowledge of God, and that contribution is sure to be closely connected with its own characteristic ideas. To rake up bygone controversies is seldom useful; not because the subjects were unimportant, or the arguments feeble; but because the life has so far gone out of them, that it is difficult for us to understand the points at issue and the position of the disputants.

The doctrine of development has so completely passed into the consciousness of our generation, that it is more necessary to guard against various popular misunderstandings of it, than to insist on its importance in the history of religion. It has brought into popular discussions an unmistakable advance towards scientific method, which is discernible in a distrust of rhetoric, a more exacting standard of truth and intellectual honesty, and a better understanding of the value of evidence. There is a tendency to treat religion and ethics as branches of psychology, and thus, with history and sociology, as part of anthropology, the general science of mankind. The studies which have at other times seemed of primary importance to religion, but which

now, in an age dominated by the scientific spirit, have receded into a subordinate position, are pure metaphysics, and all the subjects which are dealt with by *commentators*—Biblical scholarship, dogmatic theology, and the like. These latter subjects are, no doubt, vehemently discussed, and raise questions *within* the Church which demand the exercise of statesmanship; but in the great question of belief or unbelief they are, I think, of quite secondary importance. It is almost frivolous to make the whole truth or falsehood of Christianity turn upon the historical truth of a particular miracle, or the authenticity of a particular document, when among the real questions at issue are the character of the relations between the spiritual and natural world, and the difference, if any, between revealed and natural religion. Until we have satisfied ourselves on these great general questions, it is useless to argue about the virgin-birth or the manner of the resurrection. So far as these historical problems have any real importance, it is contained in their relation to those general problems which I have mentioned, and our decision of the particular case will almost certainly be determined (in the absence of direct evidence capable of compelling conviction) by our views on the larger question.

If, then, I avoid these points of current

controversy, it is not from cowardice, but because I wish you to go behind them. I wish you to dig deeper among the foundations of religious belief, to consider what faith means, and what is its essential content. And though in my fourth lecture I shall discuss the relation of historical faith to ultimate truth, and in my fifth, the religion of Jesus Christ, in the earlier part of my course I shall ask you to accompany me in an impartial and dispassionate survey of religious belief as a historical and psychological fact. Just as we might trace the growth of the artistic faculty, distinguishing, as we might surely do, its normal and healthy manifestations from the morbid and debased conditions which have sometimes affected it, so I will ask you to consider religion as it has shown itself in human history. The only assumption I shall make is that we may take upon ourselves to call some religious phenomena good or healthy and others bad or morbid. The criterion must be the extent to which they conform to, or contradict, our standard of what human life ought to be. Priority in time is no ground for stamping a type of religion as inferior. The logical development of religion does not correspond to the historical; the assumption that it does is perhaps the greatest defect in Hegel's philosophy of religion.

Let us then go back to the beginning—to

the dawn of the religious consciousness. I am convinced that those who have traced the beginnings of religion to a single source, are mistaken. Neither the dream-hypothesis, nor "animism," nor (with Statius and Petronius) the simple feeling of vague *fear*, will account for the birth of religion. And to speak (with Max Müller) of the desire to establish relations with the *Infinite*, is to introduce a word which has not proved very helpful in religious philosophy. I should rather say that the raw material of religion is the sense of some Power beyond our control, on which we are dependent, yet not so absolutely dependent as to be incapable of entering into mutual relations with it. We cannot accept Schleiermacher's view that religion is *simply* "a feeling of dependence." For, in the first place, the feeling of union is as much part of religion as the feeling of alienation; both are essential parts of the religious consciousness. And secondly it is a mistake to say that religion is purely a matter of *feeling*. The old tendency to separate and almost personify the faculties —thought, will, feeling—seems to have revived in our day, and it is causing great confusion in psychology and philosophy. The tripartite division is convenient and helpful; but we say good-bye to scientific thinking when we begin to champion the will against the intellect, or the feeling against either. To

make religion a matter of feeling, or of will, or of intellect, to the exclusion of the other faculties, is to impoverish it, and the consequences of such impoverishment soon show themselves both in theory and practice.

Power, rather than goodness, is the attribute of the divine nature which first impresses itself on the human mind. It takes a long time to discover that God's almighty power is declared "most chiefly in showing mercy and pity." That is not a conception of irresponsible power which is suggested to the savage either by his desires or by his experience. His god is naturally a great chief, and the barbarian does not respect his chief the less for being exacting, domineering, and somewhat capricious. Such conduct is part of his prerogative.

Anthropomorphic deities are the result of reflection. They are ideal constructions, partly intellectual, partly artistic, partly practical. It is impossible to distinguish these elements in the primitive mind, and we must not forget how strangely they are often blended in the religion of civilised peoples. One of the greatest difficulties which the philosophical thinker has to encounter when he tries to understand popular religious beliefs, is due to the fact that while he only asks "what is true?" people who are not philosophers allow their beliefs to be largely deter-

mined by other considerations, such as, "what pleases me?" "what helps me?" or even "what have I been taught?" The causes of belief are always at first regarded as reasons for believing. Whatever has determined the judgment may be brought as evidence. "I was told so." "It is a story honourable to my tribe." "I saw it in a dream." In certain conditions of society these are reasons.[1] Another snare is that the reasons and proofs generally given for God's existence are not those which historically produced that belief, but are attempts to justify a belief which had other and more obscure beginnings. A man will seldom give up his faith because he is beaten in argument; and he is quite right, for his faith is not based on arguments about it, but on the spiritual intuition and craving, with their specific determinations, which is the ground of all religion.

As the higher faculties develop, more special feelings are distinguished. In particular, the double consciousness of alienation and of communion, the two poles between which religion must always oscillate, becomes more and more acute. The sense of *want*, of dissatisfaction, lies very near the heart of religion. In its simplest form it is the consciousness of our own weakness, in face of the inflexible and unpitying laws of nature. Man

[1] Carveth Read, *Metaphysics of Nature*, p. 16.

finds his hopes frustrated, his wants disregarded; he feels a stranger in an alien or hostile world. His attempts at readjustment may at first be dictated by mere self-interest. But his dissatisfaction soon goes deeper. It becomes a sense of guilt. It is borne in upon him that it is his own fault if he is at strife with the laws which all other creatures obey. The discord is not between himself as God made him and the universe, but between what he has made of himself or desires for himself and the righteous laws of God. This sense of guilt is only resolved in self-abnegation, which is the highest stage to which the sense of alienation from God conducts us. We discover at last that we must be willing to lose our soul in order to find it, to die in order to live, and that in having nothing we possess all things. This I believe to be the normal course which the sense of *want* takes in the human heart. First we try to get what we desire from the external world; then, when our hearts are not satisfied so, we turn inwards and find the seat of the trouble in the corrupt state of our own hearts and wills. Lastly, when neither attempts to subdue the nature of things to ourselves, nor ourselves to the nature of things, can restore us to peace, we are induced at last to find, as it were, a new centre outside ourselves, no longer referring everything to our own welfare, but to those larger

and more permanent aspects of the Divine scheme in which it is our privilege to co-operate.

Equally important is the sense of *communion* with God, which I spoke of as the other essential element in all religion. We see the germ of it in primitive animism, which attributes life and a living spirit, not unlike our own, to all external objects. We see it in sacrifice and sacrament—in the tribal meal, of which the deity is invited to partake; in the offering of propitiation, when the tribe or the individual believes itself to have offended; in the mysterious communion-sacrifice, in which the flesh and blood of the god, in the form of his representative, are eaten by his worshippers with awe and reverence; we see it above all in prayer, that elevation of the mind to a God who sees and hears, which is so essential a part of religion that the best definitions of prayer might also serve as definitions of religion. Prayer is the very breathing of the soul, the pulsation of the heart of religion. Let no one think that he is religious, or knows what religion means, if he does not pray habitually and spontaneously. But in the sense of communion, as well as in the sense of alienation, we may trace a normal development. At first the god whose fellowship is claimed, whose friendship is invoked, whose anger is deprecated, is even such an one as his

worshippers. He is the unseen commander of their armies, the dweller on their holy hill. His interests are bound up with theirs; he goes to war with them against the gods of other nations. This crude notion of the nature and character of God breaks down under the stress of national calamities, of enlarging sympathies, of more extended knowledge. A finer ethical sense, and a keener realisation of the rights both of the individual and of other nations, make the tribal god incredible; he must change his character or perish. If the nation is progressing, we observe a gradual change in the worship offered to the Deity, and the prayers addressed to Him. It is discovered that He does not care to eat bull's flesh or drink the blood of goats; that the most acceptable sacrifice to Him is a contrite heart and a humble spirit; that He does not punish the sons for the sins of the fathers, but condemns to death the soul that sinneth; that He is not a man that He should repent; that He knows what we have need of before we ask Him; and finally that, in God's mercy, our ignorant prayers do not control events, but that only those requests which are offered in the name, that is, in the spirit and according to the will, of Him in whom all things subsist, will be granted. The consummation of the sense of communion with God coincides with the final resolution of the sense

of estrangement from Him. In both cases there is a spiritual death and resurrection, that crucial spiritual experience which St Paul describes so vividly, and which, though not always in the recognisable form of sudden conversion, is for all of us the crisis which admits us to the higher life.

The relation between ethics and religion is a difficult subject. Some anthropologists hold that at first the connection is very slight, the rudimentary sense of right and wrong being almost independent of religious beliefs. I am not convinced that this is true; but undoubtedly the "taboos" which we find exerting so potent a sway over the lives of savages seem more like the "categorical imperative" of Kant's philosophy than religious sanctions. The "taboo" is something not to be touched, or some action not to be done, with no reason given. In some cases, there may once have been a reason, which has now been forgotten. In other cases a reason is at last demanded, and the taboo is then placed under religious sanction. Historically, the flat prohibition proceeding from no known authority seems to be the earliest stage, the arbitrary order of the Deity the second. The third stage is, of course, the recognition that God has forbidden certain things because they are wrong, not *vice versâ*. Ethics draws apart from religion whenever religion forgets

that God is before all things righteous. When religion is in a healthy state, it covers the whole of moral conduct, though it would not be true to say that moral conduct is the whole of religion. Religion is not a matter of right conduct only; it touches and consecrates other parts of our complex nature.

The artistic sense, as a factor in religion, is generally distrusted and disparaged in Protestant countries. Contrasts are drawn between the religions of nature, which saw God or gods in every seemly and beautiful object, and the more serious and spiritual faith which we have derived from the Hebrews. Dr Arnold of Rugby, in a passage quoted in his *Life* by Dean Stanley, points "the contrast between Christian faith and love, and that creed of later paganism which made the feelings of man towards the Deity to be exactly those with which we gaze upon a beautiful sunset."[1] For my own part, I do not disdain the religious value of the sunset. I should be glad to think that our Lord actually used the words attributed to Him in the recently discovered fragments—"Raise the stone, and there thou shalt find Me; cleave the wood and there I am." It would only be an extension to the field of human action of that symbolism which He un-

[1] Stanley, *Life of Arnold*, after letter 307.

doubtedly sanctioned in our contemplation of flowers and other natural objects. The ugliness of Teutonic civilisation may be the Nemesis, as Matthew Arnold—differing from his father—thought, of our exclusive preoccupation with conduct, and neglect of beauty as a revelation of God. However that may be, I wish to remind you that, as a historical fact, the artistic sense has played, and still plays, an important part in the development of religion. Ideas, as we know, must be given through something. Language, if we analyse it, consists almost entirely of metaphors, that is, of calling things something which they are not, but which they resemble. Poetry affects us more than prose, because it is more lavish in the use of symbols or metaphors; a parable often "hits him who a sermon flies"; a concrete image impresses us more than an abstract truth; an overt act, whether done or witnessed, though it may be a very poor and imperfect example of an ethical principle, lays hold of us and becomes part of us to a far greater extent than a general maxim, however wise and noble. And it is as natural to some persons, and to some races, to express their feelings about the Divine by sensuous images—pictures, statues, architecture, music, orderly and solemn ritual, as it is to others to rely only on the spoken or written word, and on efforts to impress the

Divine image on the order of events. Nor is it necessary that the symbolism should have any close connection with morality. The appreciation of beauty is itself an act of worship, and has been felt to be so during the greater part of the history of religion. But here again it is possible to trace a normal and healthy course of development, and to mark it off from the perversions and degradations to which religion, on this side, is peculiarly liable. The beauty of God is only one aspect of His nature, and it cannot be separated, though it must be distinguished, from His other attributes. Indeed, the mysterious law of the association of ideas covers the relation of these aspects of the divine nature to each other. The beauty of God is a symbol of His righteousness, and His righteousness a symbol of His beauty. All religious art, whether painting or statuary or architecture or music or ceremonial, should be transparent. It should not be complete and satisfying in itself. It should suggest something behind, which it cannot fully express. This mystical quality (I use the word mystical of that which, in being what it is, suggests something beyond itself)—belongs to all religious art, and is its distinguishing feature. It is educative, not in intention so much as in fact, because it awakens in the beholder a sense of the hidden harmonies of things, and of depths of reality

lying far beyond the ken of the common surface consciousness. The proper course for the worshipper of heavenly beauty, is, as all Platonists tell us, from the many to the One, from the variegated and scattered pictures of beauty with which the phenomenal world is full, to the Eternal Source of all beauty and goodness, in whom beauty and goodness are one. How easy it is to misuse this kind of religion, I shall show in my next lecture.

In all progressive religion we can trace a double movement, expansive and intensive. The former movement leads men away from their primitive ideas of God as a Being circumscribed by place and time, limited in His interests, and intermittent in His activities, to that of a Being without body, parts, or passions, whose centre is everywhere and His circumference nowhere : whose mind is the entire scheme of the universe, and His will its entire history ; whom we can never escape at any time or any place : "If I go up to heaven, Thou art there ; if I go down to hell, Thou art there also"—a Being with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. This expansive movement, causing us to see God in everything, and everything in God, would, if followed exclusively, lead us to pantheism. But, concurrently with it, we have to note another movement, which is *intensive.* So far from our little individuality

being swallowed up and annihilated by the all-embracing power and life of God, the sense of our importance as individuals grows steadily as religion becomes higher and purer. When we "consider the heavens, even the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which He has ordained," we ask, awe-stricken, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" but the answer to the question is, "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, to crown him with glory and honour." The depths of our own personality are as unfathomable as the star-sown abysses of space; we reach forth into the infinities, and our hearts tell us that there is our home. Placed as we now know ourselves to be, on a third-rate planet attached to a somewhat insignificant star, there is something in us which can confront mere size and duration, however tremendous in extent, undaunted; there is that in us which makes us akin to Him who made all these things, and whose power is unspent in making them. And this consciousness restores the sharp outlines which had begun to be blurred in the thought of God's universal presence, and the unity of His operations. Together with our own personality, the personality of others, and the relations between living persons, become more real and vivid. These two movements, one leading towards ethical theism, personal idealism, and

the like, and the other towards mysticism, absolute idealism and pantheism, are both normal developments of religion, though they seem to diverge so widely. Neither thesis is true if wholly divorced from its antithesis. It is one danger of exclusive intellectualism in religion that it commits us to an over-logical scheme, and excludes aspects of the truth which we can appreciate but cannot reconcile with our dominant theories.

The sense of divergence and contradiction between some of our deepest convictions is one of the trials of progress. There was a time when art and science and ethics were the dutiful handmaids of religion, and when there were no quarrels between the "queen of the sciences" and her subjects. But no sooner were these special branches taken seriously, than each in turn began to break its allegiance and claim independence. Ethics in the hands of Greek philosophers refused to be hampered by the state religion, which was left to concern itself almost entirely with myth and cultus. Not till the manufacture of secular ethical systems had come to an end did Greece seek to make ethics religious. Since the Christian revelation, religion and ethics have been, on the whole, on good terms, though history records several earnest moral revolts against ecclesiasticism, and in the most advanced peoples morality is very independent of

statutory dogmas. In the same way, natural philosophy, which at first supplied religion with its cosmology, has branched off into many departments, most of which have broken loose entirely from religious influences. This is less true of metaphysics than of physical science, because Christianity has always been a philosophical religion, with its own theory of existence. At certain periods in the history of the Church, theology and philosophy have been close allies, and the acutest independent thought has stood for the most part on the side of orthodoxy. Such periods were the golden age of Christian Platonism at Alexandria; the epoch of the great Schoolmen in the Middle Ages; and, to a much more limited extent, the brief triumph of more or less orthodox Hegelianism in the nineteenth century. More often, however, philosophy has been religious, but not orthodox: it has been an esoteric school within organised religious communities, and has acted as a solvent when popular religion was crystallising into mythology and superstition. Philosophy is nothing else than the exercise of serious and unfettered intellectual activity upon the ultimate nature and meaning of existence; and even if philosophy thinks that it can do without religion, religion can never do without it. In the case of the natural sciences, the discord seems to be more profound. Not that religion

has any interest in upholding untenable views about what happens or may happen in the physical world. Her doctrines, where they impinge upon physics, embody beliefs which seemed credible and probable when they were first adopted; but whereas science can correct her mistakes without difficulty, religion cannot. A doctrine which has acquired a sacramental value is too precious a thing to be lightly sacrificed. Its place can assuredly not be supplied by any new symbol manufactured for the purpose. In other words, a religious dogma, though its form may be due to what looks like accident—some error, perhaps, as to what happened or might happen under certain circumstances—has become, in virtue of its connection with vital faith, something much more than a statement about particular facts; it has acquired an unique character, as the casket in which the soul's most precious treasures are hid, or the vehicle of her most sacred mysteries. On this most difficult subject I shall have more to say in my fourth lecture. Here I only ask you to note the cause of the divergence, the quarrel, perhaps I ought to say, between religion and science. Pieces of obsolete science get shut up in religion, like a fly in amber, and cannot be released without injury to the whole lump. Science, if she is to make any progress, is bound to shake herself free from these

trammels. Consider the history of medicine, which, on account of the ignorance of its early practitioners on the one hand, and the real efficacy of faith-healing on the other, remained so long under the tutelage of religion. To this day, over a large part of the earth's surface, magic is habitually resorted to, in combination with drugs, to cure disease, and a pestilence is dealt with by processions and sacrifices at some shrine. Real progress in the art of healing is impossible while such mental confusion reigns as to the causes of disease. The same was true of astronomy, while entangled with astrology, and of biology and geology, while it was considered a mark of piety or a matter of duty to accept the primitive Hebrew, or rather Babylonian legends, about the origin of life on this earth. Science has not been hostile to religion : she has been struggling for her own independence, not for separation, still less for the destruction of her foster-mother. She does not want separation : science is not willing to let religion alone, saying, "You go your way, and let me go mine." Science, like philosophy, ethics, and art, feels that religion is still, and must always be, a concern of hers. She has passed from tutelage into independence, but in the future she hopes for reunion. Natural science, as its ablest students well know, is an abstract study which has limited itself to certain aspects

of experience, and can tell us nothing certainly about ultimate truth. Psychology, which grows in importance every year, is a real link between natural science and religion, and provides a common ground on which, in the future, they may co-operate to their mutual advantage. Religion, purged from superstition, may once more help to cure the bodies, as well as the souls, of the sick. Science, purged of materialism, may step in to help the confessor or spiritual adviser. Meanwhile, the rebellious children of religion are all interested in the welfare of their parent.

But the reunion can only be effected on certain terms. Every department of human activity has a value of its own, and a truth of its own. It will not submit to be a mere tool of another department, nor to adopt its standards. The notion that the place of the other sciences is to be handmaids of theology is gone for ever. It is not theology, nor ecclesiasticism, but religion in its deepest and most fundamental sense, which may be an inspiring and regulating influence in the various sciences. Its function is not to hamper and fetter them, not to use them for its own purposes, but to preserve them from the errors and corruptions which a too exclusive attention to one subject often produces. Religion may preserve scholarship from futile pedantry, natural science from any tendency

to moral callousness; it may preserve art from an ignoble ministry to pride and sensuality; ethics from harsh moralism, metaphysics from indifference to concrete and particular interests. In every case its influence will be exerted in promoting the true welfare of the various sciences. And so, instead of being left bare of her former world-empire, the *regina scientiarum* may receive the reasonable service of all its provinces.

I have spoken of the tendency of religion to utilise and consecrate any given material, rather than to create symbols for itself. This tendency, which could be abundantly illustrated from the religions of all races, should make us understand the truth of our Lord's words, that a tree is known by its fruits—by its fruits, and not by its roots. If we speak of the nature of religion, we must use "nature" in the Aristotelian sense of the completed normal development of a thing, the stage in which it has fully come into the rights designated by its name. The idea that we have discredited a religious doctrine or practice, when we have industriously traced it to some ignoble or irrational source, must be discarded altogether. Some people really seem to think that if the moral is evolved from the non-moral, the increment is proved to be illusory; whereas, on the contrary, if evolution is true, the increment is an emergence from illusion.

Evolution does not smooth away the differences between things. On the contrary, it is founded on the recognition of differences, and only proves that things are related to each other in spite of their differences. And if some traces of lowly origin show an embarrassing vitality, that is a fact familiar to all students of human customs. Life is full of these quaint, curious survivals, the origin of which has been long forgotten. When we grasp a friend by the hand, we do not consider that we are taking precautions that neither party shall smite the other under the fifth rib during the conversation; when we uncover before a lady or a social superior, we forget that the original object was to prevent our hat from contracting taboo-contagion, so that we could not wear it again. Clothes, we are told, were first worn from the very opposite motive to that which now prescribes their use. When the fashionable lady will not let her daughter be married in May, she is probably ignorant that the uncanny rites of the Lemuralia are due in that month, which gave Ovid a plausible explanation of the superstition. Human nature is very loath to give up an old custom, whether social or religious. If the old can anyhow be used, it will be adapted and reinterpreted, not rejected. It is only to be expected that religion, the most conservative of all institutions, should supply some of the

strongest instances of this tendency. Civilised nations maintain in their cultus ceremonies which palpably owe their origin to the most barbarous superstition. The custom of fasting and continence before a solemn function must be due to the widespread notion that the natural secretions convey ceremonial defilement. The desire to subdue the "pride of sinful flesh" is quite an afterthought. But to accuse those who obey an old tradition of sharing that superstition is not only unjust, but shows ignorance of history, and of human nature. It requires, no doubt, some discrimination to gauge the true character of religious beliefs, when they are accompanied by a possibly large fraction of fossilised tenets or practices, and by others which still have a meaning and a use, but not at all the meaning which they had originally. Yet these are some of the difficulties which must be faced by those who wish to study a very intricate subject.

And, since I do not wish to deal only in vague generalisations, I will conclude this lecture by a brief outline of the religious education of the Jewish people, which is the best example in history of normal religious development. Of course, the Old Testament must be studied with the help of modern critical scholarship. Parts of the Hexateuch only illustrate a late phase in the Hebrew

religion. The Law, in all its arrogant completeness, was later than the Prophets — a good instance to show that the logical and temporal evolution of religious ideas do not always coincide.

We must not look in the Old Testament for any proof of God's existence. That is always taken for granted. Even the fool who says in his heart, "There is no God," is no dogmatic atheist, but one who hopes that "God will not see, neither will the God of Jacob regard it." The existence of God, and of one God, is taken for granted. The faint authentic traces of the religion of the Hebrews before Moses indicate a prevailing belief in demons or spirits, often attached to sacred trees or stones, but no national polytheism. Moses proclaimed the name of Jahweh, of which the old explanation, "I am," or "I shall be," is perhaps more likely than any other. But Jahweh was at first only the war-god of the children of Israel. He is lord of the whole earth only by right of conquest, in the future, over other gods. He is spoken and thought of sometimes as having a human body; but when He appears to men, and mixes in their affairs, it is "the angel of the Lord" who is generally spoken of. This "angel" is no mere messenger, but a partial appearance of Jahweh Himself. So the "name," the "glory," and the "face" of Jahweh are manifestations of His

personal activity. In the time of the Judges, images of Jahweh, such as the ephod and terāphim, were used, and were not objected to till the time of the Prophets.[1] His abode is "in heaven," while Baal, the god of the half-conquered land, had his seat upon earth. After a struggle, which came to a climax in the reigns of Ahab and Jehu, the Baal-worship, which had flourished alongside of the service of Jahweh, was proscribed. The nation thus escaped a great danger; for the cult of Jahweh had at least two points of great superiority, in its prohibition of magic, and in its freedom from impure rites. There has been a tendency among liberal critics to disparage the primitive Hebrew religion, as if it were originally a crude nature-worship like that of the other Semites, which only became moralised under the influence of the prophets. The evidence is all against this view. The "covenant" between Jahweh and His people was a covenant which involved moral obligations on both sides. Their ideas of righteousness and justice needed to be educated and purified; but their religion was a pure and ethical religion from the first. When Amos lifted up his voice against the social evils which he saw around him—and Amos, let it be

[1] We have to choose between this view, which is supported by many narrative passages in the Old Testament, and the traditional date of the Decalogue as we have it.

remembered, lived as early as the eighth century B.C.—he announced no new revelation; he appealed to the old covenant between God and Israel. "Hear the word that the Lord hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up out of the land of Egypt, saying, you only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities." A candid comparison of the newly found Code of Hammurabi with the Book of the Covenant will exhibit the great superiority of the latter in humanity and elevation. And the narratives about the Patriarchs show a comparatively high standard of morality, combined, it is true, with ethical obtuseness in some directions.

But it is in the Prophets that the religion of Israel culminates. The prophet, as fully developed, seems to be a combination of the ancient *seer*, who was believed to have supernatural insight into unknown or future events, and the ecstatic religious enthusiast, who appeared especially at critical periods in the national history. We need not delay here on the political importance of the prophets, nor on the singular fact that the earlier writers were almost exclusively prophets of woe and disaster, while the later are full of hope. I wish only to indicate the manner in which they

purified the conception of God and His relations with His people. I have said that the dogma, "God is in heaven," was an important step, and one which aided in the discomfiture of Baal. The prophets, indeed, teach that Jahweh manifests Himself in His holy temple on Mount Zion; but the passages which seem to imply a local inhabitation are plainly survivals of a cruder faith, such as we find everywhere. Jahweh says, "Behold, I fill heaven and earth" (Jer. xxiii. 24); and this conception of ubiquity leads us very near to St John's "God is Spirit" (*cf.* Isa. xxxi. 3). For this reason, the mediation of angels as messengers is no longer needed; and a direct polemic against anthropomorphism was carried on in a sustained attack upon images of the Deity. Elijah and Elisha had raised no protest against the bulls at Dan and Bethel; the writing prophets cry out, "Thy bull, O Samaria, stinketh" (Hos. v. 5). An ubiquitous God can own no rival. We are far from the days when a defeat of Israel by the Moabites is attributed to the "great wrath" of Chemosh, in answer to the sacrifice of the king's son (2 Kings iii. 27).[1] The teaching that foreign nations, even the Assyrian world-

[1] This is, I think, the plain meaning of the passage. On the other hand, too much importance has been attached to Judges xi. 23, 24. Jephthah could hardly use any other language to those whose national god Chemosh was.

power, are merely instruments in Jahweh's hand, is quite new. The familiar argument would have been that of Ahaz: "Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice unto them" (2 Chron. xxviii. 23). But the faith of Israel was strong enough to bear the strain of national calamity, and to be purified by it. Belief in the "righteousness" of God—in a triumphant vindication of the eternal laws of justice and mercy—conquered all doubts, and transmuted all disappointments into grounds of a larger hope. In nothing was this chastening more beneficial than in modifying the notion of Jahweh as a "jealous" God. The prophets lose no opportunity of finding ethical motives for ritual observances, and an edifying symbolical value for ancient ordinances. Fasting, almsgiving, even circumcision (Jer. iv. 4) are spiritualised. In the matter of sacrifice, God is explicitly denied to be "jealous." "I will not reprove thee because of thy sacrifices, nor for thy burnt-offerings, because they were not alway before me," is typical of the prophetical language. Micah asserts that God requires *nothing* but upright and merciful conduct. Jeremiah, himself a priest, says that God does not care whether the burnt-offerings are given to Him or eaten by the people (Jer. vii. 21). It is an unsolved mystery why the priests allowed such revolutionary sentiments to stand

in the sacred Canon. The decay and ruin of the Jewish state only exalted the prophetic assurance of the coming of a righteous kingdom. It was to be ruled over by a Davidic monarch endowed with a sevenfold dower of Divine grace.[1] How this national hope was elevated and purified by the prophets, till their descriptions of the Messiah seemed to point directly to the figure of Christ, cannot here be set forth in detail.

Out of the bosom of the prophetic school sprang the man who was to herald its decay. The priest-prophet Ezekiel, more than any other man, was the founder of the "Priest's Code," which is visibly modelled in part on his ideal picture of a theocratic commonwealth. Instead of moral exhortation, iron discipline was to be applied to God's people. We cannot wonder at the reaction, when we see how feeble was the power of prophetism to prevent relapses into foul idolatry under Manasseh, and to stop such hideous abuses as are mentioned in 2 Kings xxiii. 7. The success of the priestly legislation has wiped out the memory of the many abuses which it terminated. The abuses which it introduced will be touched on in my next lecture.

The later history of Judaism illustrates that swaying of the pendulum between sacerdotalism and prophetism, that alternate prepon-

[1] Dr Barnes in *Cambridge Theological Essays*, p. 353.

derance of the disciplinarian and the mystic, which is usually to be found in fully developed religions. The last and greatest of the prophets, appearing suddenly, after a silence of prophecy for four hundred years, to announce the advent of the Kingdom of Heaven and of his own still greater successor, was unable to break the bonds which legalism had riveted upon the Jewish nation; but Israel, in spite of this, fulfilled her mission by giving birth, amid the death-throes of her national existence, to a religion in which all the highest aspirations of the human heart were completely satisfied.

I have only indicated a few of the lines on which the Old Testament may be studied, as throwing light on the normal growth of the religious consciousness. My advice to those who wish to study religion historically is: choose the religion of the Hebrews *and one other*—Buddhism or Mohammedanism, perhaps—but for every reason, make the Bible your chief text-book.

And remember, lastly, that no one can understand religion who does not know it, and that no one can know it who does not live in the spirit of a *worshipper*. When the spirit of worship is absent, there may be the form of religion; there may be intelligent interest in religion; but religion itself, and knowledge of religion, there cannot be. Let us investigate

and criticise and speculate as freely as we will; but let us not forget that our subject is the mysterious instinct which guards the sacred founts of life. "Put off thy shoes from thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

II.

FALSEHOOD IN RELIGION

I SAID last week that I shall assume that we can distinguish healthy and morbid conditions in religion. I do not suppose that this assumption will be seriously disputed. And yet before proceeding with the analysis of falsehood or disease in religion, which is my subject to-day, I think it may be well to insist that the conception of "sin" is no figment of theologians, but a positive fact, which cannot be resolved into any such negative ideas as privation of good, or imperfection. The tendency to suppress the idea of sin is very strong in our generation. It proceeds partly from causes which we need not regret, such as a humanising of the idea of punishment, making us less afraid of vindictive penalties at God's hands; a shifting of the centre of gravity in morals, laying more stress on what a man is good for, and less on what he is bad for; a revolt against overstrained teaching about the utter depravity of mankind; a truer

view as to the historical value of primitive legends about the Fall of Man; and partly to less satisfactory causes, such as the shallow optimism and self-satisfaction induced by prosperity and security; flabby sentimentalism, increased by the same conditions; and a widespread misunderstanding of the doctrine of evolution, which is taken as a guarantee of social and individual progress from one generation to another. But there are several considerations which make it impossible to regard sin as mere imperfection or privation. The very idea of sin implies falling short of an attainable, not of an unattainable standard. The attainable standard is not absolute perfection, but relative perfection; as we might speak of a perfect child, without imputing to it the strength or intelligence of a man, or a perfect mammal, which nevertheless lacks the power of flight and of breathing under water. The word sin implies the existence of something which ought not to be where it is; in using it, we set up an external standard and condemn what fails to conform to it. Certainly no one who was not defending a thesis would say that unscrupulous ambition, cruelty, treachery, unbridled sensuality, were only defects and shortcomings. Gigantic vices resemble rather some huge tumour, drawing to itself all the nourishment of the body, and ultimately destroying itself with its host. But

the most decisive argument against identifying sin with imperfection is the verdict of the human consciousness itself. The consciousness of sin, as a positive malignant fact, is most intense in the highest natures. It is the saint, not the sinner, who says, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" It was the Son of God Himself who, as Christians believe, gave His life a ransom for sin, because no smaller price could destroy its power.

The notion that universal progress is a law of nature, and that evil is a thing incidental to its earlier stages, to be worked off in the later, is quite unscientific. The time-process is not an automatic ethical winnowing machine. Death closes all, for good and bad, great and small; for the planet and for the fly. Nor can survival be regarded as a seal of Nature's approval, unless we are prepared to affirm that Nature loves the insect parasite better than some of her noblest types which have flourished and passed away. Not life at any cost, but realisation of Nature's idea for the species, is success. Nature, or rather Nature's God, for it is misleading to personify Nature, has a certain idea of humanity, a scheme to be realised in and by the human race, and it is by our conformity to this plan, and by our efforts to further it, that we are to be judged. The

survival of the race for an indefinite period does not seem to be part of the Divine plan. Science can calculate roughly the number of years during which life on this planet will be possible for creatures constituted as we are.

The doctrine of evolution, then, gives no countenance to the notion that evil is only imperfection, or a necessary stage in the development of good. Evil is something that ought not to be there; it is a disease and disfigurement of human nature. It is as such that it will be dealt with in this lecture. I wish to consider the distortions and corruptions which infect and spoil the noblest part of our endowment as spiritual beings—our consciousness of God and our relations with Him.

It is a well-known fact that the highest and most arduously acquired of our mental faculties are the most precarious, the most likely to fail us under morbid conditions. When the brain and nervous system are out of order, the moral qualities first show signs of decay. The moral callousness of the insane and half insane, the profound physical degeneracy of the instinctive criminal, are well known. The same phenomena appear in the religion of a decadent race. Those spiritual elements, which we have found to be characteristic of the higher religions, are the first to disappear. Religion loses its close

connection with morality; the religious conscience becomes blunter than the conscience of the honourable man of the world. The religious temper, the "joy and peace in believing," which is at once the loveliest ornament and the purest reward of the truly religious character, is less frequently met with; religious art also suffers, and becomes tawdry, tasteless, and meaningless. A decadent religion relapses into mere cultus, which is the shell or husk of true religion; it depends more and more on the superstitions of the uneducated, which it encourages instead of correcting. It stoops to positive deception and fraud, favours a policy of obscurantism, and tries either to impede popular education or to control it. In this way a rotten religious system becomes an active social poison, which may accelerate greatly the process of national decay.

Sometimes religion seems to be stationary or decadent when the nation at large is healthy and even progressive. This could not occur if the progress were harmonious; but a sudden one-sided development, chiefly affecting the externals of life, may produce this result. The nineteenth century was a case in point. It was a period of unexampled progress in the appliances of civilisation, a class of discovery which of course may be advantageous or the reverse

to a nation. All depends on whether the time saved by the new machinery is well or ill used. On the whole, Europe and America have mistaken comfort for civilisation, and the net result of the new discoveries has been to make life more artificial, complex, and difficult than it was before. But the same period witnessed an enormous extension of valuable scientific knowledge. The men who were making these discoveries were justly conscious of having a sacred mission, which was not at all understood by the guardians of ecclesiastical dogma. I have already shown how exceedingly difficult it is for religion to surrender beliefs, however alien to her own proper sphere, which have once been taken up into her system, and made the vehicles or sacraments of her spiritual teaching. And so it happened in the last century that many true servants of humanity, whose devotion to truth, justice, and social progress was essentially religious, were driven into an attitude of antagonism to organised religion, which was very injurious both to them and to it. Most of their discoveries are now being quietly smuggled into the orthodox citadel.

Theology is, I fear, an ungrateful science. It begins by calling a new discovery absurd; next it denounces it as impious; finally it asserts that everybody knew it before. This policy is enough to drive the student of the

history of thought to despair. The Deity, we are told, cannot alter the past. But the ecclesiastical historian can, and does. He is prepared not only to build the sepulchres of Galileo and Darwin, but to write upon them the names of a whole *catena* of ecclesiastics. This is the Church's way of making the *amende honorable* for abusing these worthies during their lifetime. It is ungracious, no doubt; but happily the great names of science have not lost the honours due to them.

There is another reason, besides the extreme conservatism of dogma, which makes a religion sometimes seem to lag behind the best public opinion of the age. Any old institution, which has played a prominent part in the national life, must put forth fibres which entangle themselves with other institutions. It must become a factor in the national civilisation, and share its defects as well as its merits. A revelation which has been embodied in an institution ceases to be a pure revelation; it is, as Harnack would say, "secularised" to some extent. There is and must be an element of compromise and accommodation in a great Church. The tests of membership must be external and mechanical tests—the acceptance of a formula, the performance of a rite, the enrolment on a register. These formulas and ceremonies cannot be devised

to satisfy the profoundest thinker in the community; they must be intelligible and acceptable to the average intellect and conscience; at best, they can only be a very popular presentation of what the wisest man believes. Moreover, when a society is so large and important as to need able administrators, it will be governed by men of affairs, not by saints or prophets. Such men are not very susceptible to new ideas. They note currents of opinion in the spirit of politicians rather than of philosophers; and the public on whose pulse they keep their finger is not the most enlightened part of the nation, but the great body of Church members. They are what is called "practical" men; that is, immediate effectiveness rather than truth is what they aim at. A great Church is generally very prone to form unholy alliances. The Roman Church is the centre of anti-English agitation in Ireland, of anti-Russian agitation in Poland, of anti-republican agitation in France. A Church that has gone into politics may or may not be a useful factor in the national life, but it is no longer a purely religious body, and cannot claim to be treated as such.

The force of reaction is also very considerable. New ideas seem to have a great success, sweeping in whole populations of adherents; but many of these sudden conversions are

unreal. As the Dutch theologian Tiele says: "The ancient faith has only bowed before the mighty storm; but as soon as tranquillity is restored, it rears its head again, either in its old forms, unchanged, or with modifications and under new names, but retaining its former substance." It has often been pointed out that this happened to Christianity. There was an enormous influx of pagans into the Church in the fourth century, who were never really Christianised. They succeeded in introducing a great deal of paganism into the Church; and to this day the majority of Roman Catholics are to all intents and purposes polytheists. The vitality of the lower religious types is indeed marvellous. All the features which characterise the primitive religions have reappeared within Christianity—magic, fetishism, bloody sacrifice, idolatry, self-torture, orgiastic worship. It is in the interest of some of these alien intruders, and not of the religion of Jesus Christ, that a Church becomes obscurantist. For we must always distinguish between Christianity, as it is based on Christ's own life and teaching, and the forms which it has assumed in its conflict with the world. There is no guarantee that *nomina* and *numina* coincide. It is even possible that an older, discredited faith might revive so far as to "capture the

machine," and take a new lease of life under a fresh name.

Let us now consider some of the perversions and corruptions which have appeared among the higher religions.

The Jewish religion, in its later period, forbade altogether the use of images of the Deity. Such images had in earlier times been freely employed in the worship of Jahweh, as in almost all other primitive religions. It is a natural mode of giving vividness to our consciousness of the Deity's presence; and in itself there is nothing objectionable in it. But it lends itself to many erroneous ideas about God, and is a hindrance to the spiritualising of religion. Idolaters tend to regard God as a being like themselves in character if not in form; to localise His activities; to associate His presence too closely with the symbols which they have made of Him, and perhaps to divide Him into a plurality of heavenly powers, the "gods many and lords many" of paganism. The best that can be said of this type of religion is that it is favourable to art; in all other ways it has a degrading influence. The Jews came back from the exile with a deep-rooted disgust and contempt for idolatry which never again left them. Our own ancestors at the Reformation had much the same feeling. It was not sheer vandalism which defaced the architectural glories of the Middle

Ages; the iconoclasts knew and hated the system which they were destroying. They believed that the hierarchy of mediators which Catholicism had set up between man and God was derogatory to God and injurious to man, and moreover that the whole scheme was without foundation in fact. With the usual one-sidedness of reformers, they drew no distinction between the use and abuse of visible symbols; they determined to discard instruction by the eye altogether, and to base religion as far as possible upon the written word. Their error is so generally admitted now, that it is more important to insist on the reality of the evils which provoked it. In Southern Europe, where no reform took place, the reversion to idolatry and polydemonism seems to have become more and more pronounced.

The belief that the air is tenanted by a multitude of spirits, intermediate between man and God, who exercise an influence sometimes benign, sometimes maleficent, upon human life, springs most easily out of the nature religions. Its darker aspect—devil-worship—is the reverse side of the genial legends which make paganism, whether in its classical or Christian form, superficially so attractive. How much the religion of later antiquity was infected by this disease may be seen from Plutarch's treatise, *De Superstí-*

tione. The awful misery caused by these superstitions in the Middle Ages is graphically described by Lecky in his *Rise and Influence of Rationalism.* Those who are disposed to admire the so-called "Ages of Faith," and to regret the disappearance of unquestioning credulity in civilised countries, should study these records, and also the state of morality which existed in the Middle Ages. An impartial student of the history of thought will view the growth of the scientific spirit in Europe with as much satisfaction as that which Lucretius, somewhat prematurely, expressed at the enlightenment already brought into the world by natural science.

> "Hunc igitur terrorem animi tenebrasque necessest
> Non radii solis, neque lucida tela diei
> Discutiant, sed naturæ species ratioque."

Magic was originally genuine, though mistaken, empirical science. It was believed that the course of events could, in some cases, be controlled by occult agencies which mankind was able to put in motion. The evidence was not all adverse to this theory, or it would have been given up earlier. If anyone wishes to realise how plausible a belief in occult powers was at a comparatively recent period, let him study the evidence for the cure of the "king's evil" (scrofula) by the royal touch. The desire to control events is so strong in the

human breast that men are exceedingly loath to give up a belief in magic in some form. Even the promise of Christ that prayers offered in His name—that is (in Hebrew idiom) in His spirit, in accordance with His will—shall be answered, has been taken as if the "name" of Christ was a talisman compelling God to grant our requests, or a blank cheque upon the bank of heaven which we can fill up as we please. The *ex opere operato* theory of sacramental grace is essentially magical, and therefore sub-Christian. We must never suppose that God is bound by any covenant, except to act in accordance with His own nature, which is to be just, merciful, and wise. The protests of the Hebrew prophets against sacrificial bargaining, bribery, and flattery in devotion are by no means out of date.

A kindred error is the claim of special privileges and powers by a priestly caste. It is easy to see how this claim appeals to the weak side both of priesthood and laity, and how inevitably, under its influence, ecclesiastical discipline degenerates into a system of commutations of penalties for money payments. The question is not a simple one, whether these claims are wholly mischievous in practice; because, without them, ecclesiastical discipline can hardly be made effective. But it can scarcely be doubted that they have

no foundation in the nature of things as ordained by God, and that they are the cause of much evil. They foster the spirit of exclusiveness, which was the most unlovely side of the Hebrew religion, and has been the curse of Christianity. All other moral evils have been diminished by the Christian revelation; intolerance has never taken such odious shapes as when Christian priests have had the direction of public policy. It is an evil legacy from Judaism, augmented by the Roman feeling about treason, which was transferred from the emperor to the Church. The spirit of exclusiveness, the belief that our own religious body alone is blessed by God, gives a logical justification for persecution and bigotry. It perverts our sense of God's justice, and makes us bitter and unreasoning partisans. Against this gigantic evil can only be set the great increase in effective force which results from the cohesion, discipline, and confidence of a hierarchically ordered body. But since this force has most often been used on the wrong side, we cannot desire its further extension.

Sometimes the nation, rather than a priestly caste within it, is regarded as the favourite of heaven. It is a very interesting fact that the three greatest religions, Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam, have only reached their highest perfection in the hands of nations

other than those in which they arose. Each had to contend with a *nationalist* form. Christianity had to separate itself from Ebionitism, Buddhism from Jainism, Mohammedanism from the sect of the Wahhabites. None of these sects found adherents outside the nation of their birth. This phenomenon shows, I think, how strong the tendency to exclusiveness in religion is.

One of the most difficult practical problems in religion is to maintain an even balance between the claims of authority and inspiration. The prophets have always looked forward to a time when the religious consciousness shall be completely autonomous, a time when, as Jeremiah says, God will write His law in the hearts and minds of His people, so that none need ask his neighbour about God, for all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest. This complete autonomy of the spirit, when each man shall walk by the light which shines in his own heart, is the state of which all prophets have dreamed, and which all mystics have striven to attain. But there are times when the flame of the spirit burns low. The path is no longer clear; men hesitate, and look about for a guide. They long for some authoritative declaration, which they may believe and obey without doubt or qualification. To very many minds, the externality of a revelation is

the very condition of its trustworthiness: if it came only to their inner consciousness, they would say to themselves, as in Goethe's *Iphigenia:*

"Es spricht kein Gott; es spricht dein eignes Herz,"

and would be offended by the answer, that it is only through our hearts that God speaks to us. Such minds crave for positive declarations; they wish to have some infallible authority, divinely accredited, to which they may appeal. Some find it in the living voice of the Church—a belief which preserves the principle of development, and, theoretically at least, frees the living from the paralysing grip of the dead hand. But an infallible living authority is too patent an absurdity to command wide homage. Its blunders cannot be embellished by historians; it entangles itself in conflicts where the right is obviously not all on one side. And so those who crave for a final court of appeal in religious matters generally seek for it in the past. In our own country we are familiar with appeals to the undivided Church, and to the verbally-inspired Book. In periods which are more distinguished for learning than for originality, the wisdom of the ancients becomes a regular cult, and the dreary science of commentatorship is held in high honour. This tendency is not peculiar to Judaism and Christianity. In

the age of Plutarch, as Dill says,[1] "It was almost a profanity to imagine that Homer or Hesiod or Pindar were less of philosophers than Aristotle or Chrysippus. It was assumed that the early myth-makers and lawgivers possessed a sacred lore of immense value and undoubted truth, which they dimly shadowed forth in symbolism of fanciful tale or allegory. . . . Thus the later philosophic theologian is not reading his own higher thoughts of God into the grotesque fancies of a remote antiquity; he is evolving and interpreting a wisdom more original than his own." The treatise of Plutarch on Isis and Osiris is a good example of this method, which is still in vogue in our schools, universities, and pulpits. Even in philosophy, which does not canonise her heroes, certain names are used to conjure with; and we are admonished to go "back to Kant," or "back to Aristotle," just as in theology we are invited to compose our differences by a common act of homage to the first six, or two, or fifteen centuries. But the epoch-makers themselves have known better. "I could not replace myself," said Napoleon. Each century delivers its message, which is a guide and a warning, but not a law, to its successor. "All that historical reversions can do is to suggest that in the onward movement

[1] Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, p. 423.

something precious has been left behind, which it were well to recover before going further. The Nature, the Greece, the Christianity we go back to is not in the past: it is, seen through the arch of experience, the gleam of that untrodden world to which we move. To seek them in the past is to seek the living among the dead. The gates of Paradise are eternally open."[1]

The tyranny of the dead hand, which through religion has laid its icy fingers on law and social life also, has arrested the progress of the greater part of mankind.[2] The mass of the human race have been chained down to those views of life and conduct, and those beliefs, which they entertained at the time when their ideas were first consolidated into a systematic form.[3] How much Christendom has been in danger of this kind of petrifaction (some would like to spell the word with a large P) is known to all.[4] But much stronger

[1] W. Wallace, *Lectures and Essays*, p. 55.

[2] "In government and religion" (says Professor Carveth Read), "there is a natural tendency to parasitism: in their growth they often strangle the people they had previously sustained."—*Metaphysics of Nature*, p. 304.

[3] *Cf.* Maine, *Ancient Law*, p. 77.

[4] The tendency of religion to throw its ægis over mere custom, even when it has no rational or moral significance, is well shown in the history of the Russian Church. A writer in the *Nineteenth Century* (Feb. 1906) says: "Peter the Great compelled his subjects to adopt European dress, and to cut off their enormous beards, a measure which at

instances are furnished by the history of India; and of Islam, where the liberal and mystical elements were effectually strangled by an orthodox reaction.

The appeal to history is here decisive. Religious beliefs and usages tend to become excessively rigid, to become crystallised or fossilised; and this is the disease of which many nations have died, if complete stagnation or retrogression is national death. It is a warning to us all. Religious people often need to remember that there is a sense in which they should forget the things that are behind, and press toward the mark of their high calling. "All our fresh springs," as the Psalmist says, are in God; and God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

The opposite error, that of disregarding all constituted authority, has been the parent of all heresies and schisms, and has done incal-

first sight would appear almost too trivial to deserve notice. But these regulations provoked the horror of all orthodox Christians in Russia. One of the Patriarchs of Moscow asked with dismay: 'Where will those who shave their chins stand at the Day of Judgment? Will they stand among the righteous, who are adorned with beards, or among the beardless heretics?' To the Russians of the time, the possession of a beard seemed, incredible as it may appear, an adjunct indispensable to salvation, and serious revolts were caused by conscientious orthodox believers, who would rather sacrifice their lives than their beards."

culable mischief to the cause of religion. Undisciplined prophetism is a purely disintegrating force, a solvent of good government as well as of bad. Maine has shown how the over-readiness of the Greeks to disembarrass themselves from cumbrous forms and legal formulas prevented them from ever producing a durable system of jurisprudence. The impotence of religious mysticism to hive its own honey without the help of the priests is an illustration of the same law. Implicit trust in personal inspiration is an error. There is but one Spirit of God, who speaks to us in diverse manners, dividing to every man severally as He will. Respect for authority in religious matters is only the recognition of this obvious truth. Submission to its dictates is often the truest wisdom, both in belief and morals. Many young men have made shipwreck of their lives by resolving to be a law to themselves while still immature and untaught by experience. It is not without excuse that "the tradition of the elders" acquires the weight and sanctity which has sometimes proved so pernicious.

There are also errors traceable to one-sided development of the intellectual, or emotional, or practical faculties. The true content of religion embraces, as I have said, all parts of our nature. We must not confine it within the range of will, or thought, or feeling.

Many of the wrong lines which religion has taken have been due to disproportionate emphasis on one or other of these faculties.

Let us consider first the error of *intellectualism.* This may take the form of naturalism, or, if invested with a poetical halo, of naturalistic pantheism. It is only to be expected that those who are honourably occupied in the investigation of nature's secrets, or in pursuits exclusively connected with the mechanical order, should live so entirely in that world as to forget the abstract character of the working hypotheses on which they proceed. In such cases the remedy for intellectualism is often more intellect. Philosophy may not have proved much, but it has knocked the bottom out of materialism. Sometimes, however, intellectualism in religion is the result of atrophy of the emotional and ethical sides of character. The effect of habits and pursuits upon creed is a very interesting subject, which might form the subject of a fruitful investigation. But on the wider field of history we can see how a one-sided national development has produced religions which have been false because they have neglected the emotional and practical needs of humanity. In reading Greek literature, we are amazed to see how the intellectual development of that marvellous race outstripped the ethical. The

forensic speeches of the Attic orators show how little ordinary citizens could trust one another, and how every kind of disgraceful imputation seemed plausible to an Athenian jury. The Romans, blind as they were to the artistic gifts of the Greek race, took the measure of their moral qualities pretty accurately. They were "too clever by half" even for their own interests. The Greeks, as we all know, tended to regard virtue as the necessary result of a clear head. They thought that the one thing needful was to purge the mind of ignorance and prejudice. Only in the last times, when Greece had perished in giving birth to Hellenism, and Hellenism had become cosmopolitan, did "philosophy" become the art of life instead of speculative science, aiming at edification rather than knowledge. In later times, this intellectualist tendency has flourished under the name of rationalism. The religion of Confucius, if we may believe our authorities, is in its present form a type of a rationalistic creed—a much better example, I should think, than that of Greece, because the influence of Plato pointed in another direction. "Rationalism," says Edgar Quinet, "is the religion of China. Intellect is the sole ground of pre-eminence, personal merit the sole aristocracy. Everything there is exactly measured, calculated, weighed, by the laws of human nature; its one idol is good

sense." And, as the result of this system, "Chinese society makes man the final end, and so humanity finds its goal in its starting-point. It is stifled within the limits of humanity. In this dwarf society, everything is deprived of its crown. Morality wants heroism; verse, poetry; philosophy, metaphysics; life, immortality; because, at the summit of everything, there is no God."[1]

The course of religious development in India illustrates another danger of one-sided intellectualism. The Eastern mind loves to meditate on the Infinite, as the abyss which swallows up all finite being. According to this view, reality is that in which all distinctions are obliterated, and the world of manifold existence becomes an untrue appearance, an illusion of Maya. In this infinite, together with all other distinctions, the differences between right and wrong, true and false, disappear, so that nothing is left but to brood over the nothingness of existence, and pine for the cessation of personal life.

Europe has never understood the attractiveness of this kind of religion. But the danger of intellectualism is illustrated by certain chapters of post-reformation history. Protestantism overcame the domination of *cultus*,

[1] Quinet, *La Génie des Religions*, pp. 224, 225.

under which religion had become a matter of specific acts and ceremonial; but in the conflict with its rival it came near to identifying religion with theology, and faith with a confidence based on bare knowledge of the facts. Rationalism reigned in the Protestant countries in the eighteenth century. A well-matched duel was conducted in England between deism and orthodoxy, in which both sides used the same weapons, while religion was starving for want of its proper food. The natural result was an outbreak of romanticism and emotionalism, which occurred both in England and Germany. Emotionalism was the dominant note of the Methodist and Evangelical movements, romanticism of the Catholic revival. Rationalism was their common enemy, and bitter as is their distrust of each other, they have always been ready to join hands against liberalism in theology. And yet, with an inconsistency of which there are many instances in the history of religion, both sides have shown a great partiality for the "evidential" method of apologetics, which is essentially an attempt to refute rationalism by turning its own weapons against itself. Nothing can be more purely rationalistic than to base the truth of Christianity on miracles and prophecy, the evidence for which must be weighed only by the understanding. The evidential school was the child of rationalism,

and is falling into deserved contempt because its victories help religion no more than its defeats hinder it.

Emotionalism is certainly nearer to the heart of Christianity than rationalism. The most original part of the Christian revelation was the exalted place which it gave to the affections. But those who have expatiated on love as "the greatest thing in the world," and based their religion entirely on warm and tender feeling, have sometimes forgotten the extremely unemotional *method* of our Lord's teaching, while they quite rightly lay stress on the honour and dignity which it assigns to the affections. Love, in our Lord's teaching, is a duty based on the fact of our relationship to each other and to Himself. It is the natural and proper condition of the human heart that we should love our neighbours as ourselves. The exercise of this love is the fulfilling of the law—the satisfaction of the claim that God makes upon us. But no teacher ever relied less on appeals to the emotions than our Lord. He never tried to stir His disciples to excitement of any kind. None of His hearers ever swooned in a paroxysm of terror or remorse or ecstatic rapture. We never hear that He was what we should call an eloquent preacher. Religious excitement seems to be purely pathological, and the cultivation of it belongs to the old nature-religions rather than

to Christianity. Few things are more injurious to the mental balance than to induce deliberately a state of religious ecstasy, whether voluptuous or painful. This is the real reason why extreme asceticism is harmful. Moderate self-discipline is invaluable for the strengthening of character; but self-torture would never have been practised systematically with that object. It came into vogue because it was found, by experience, to induce the ecstatic trance, the morbid nature of which was not known. That this was the origin of non-ceremonial fasting seems to be well established. It promoted a hypnotic state in which the mind was at once sensible of strange joys, and susceptible to suggestions which strengthened it in its struggle against sin. In its present extremely attenuated form—the fish-dinner—it is quite innocuous, but hardly adequate to fulfil the purposes of self-discipline.

I hope I have now shown that most of the religious observations which history records are errors of disproportion, of one-sided development. Their falsehood is shown by their tendency to pass out of the religious sphere altogether. A Church which has organised itself into a society for purposes of government and discipline tends to become a mere political institution. The Church of Rome is, of course, something much better than this;

but it is possible to regard it as before all things a continuation of the Roman Empire, the pale ghost of the Latin world power. And so far as this is a true description, its fortunes belong to secular, not to sacred, history. Polytheism, which we mentioned next, degenerates into fetishism and other degrading superstitions, which have nothing to do with religion as the word is understood by civilised peoples. To offer presents to a mythical saint in illness is no more a religious act than to give a fee to a doctor; the only difference is that the doctor may cure the disease, while the saint cannot. Even the sacraments may entirely lose their religious character, if their operation is believed to be mechanical. The praying-wheels of Buddhism have their analogue in parts of Christendom. Similarly, rationalism ends in a purely secular rule of life, such as Orientalists have described among Confucians, or such as we see among large numbers of our own educated class. They are kept straight by the code of honour, and by public opinion, but are quite irreligious. Again, the religion of pure sentiment becomes more and more a mood of excitement: the jaded appetite can only be stimulated by a profusion of sensuous symbols, or by tawdry and mawkish rhetoric. It retains the form of religion better than rationalism, but the substance is gone. It is a pernicious type,

when it touches practical questions. The cause of true social and moral reform has no worse enemies than the hysterical humanitarian and the morbid-minded agitator.

St Paul knew the magnitude of his task when he called upon his converts, one and all, to "come to the perfect (or full-grown) man." Christianity does not lay hold of one faculty only. "I pray God," says the same apostle, "that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of Christ." We are to "cleanse ourselves from all defilements of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness." No part of our complex being must be left out, none must be neglected or unconsecrated. "It does not take much of a man to be a Christian," said an outside observer, "but it takes all there is of him."[1] "Religion," says Fichte, "is a *harmonious* fundamental disposition of the soul." This being so, it is easy to understand that misgrowths and deformities must be of frequent occurrence. For which of us can boast of "harmonious" development? Which of us bears any resemblance to that ideal figure, the ἀνὴρ τετράγωνος of the Greeks—the "sapiens teres atque rotundus" of Horace? And what nation has done more than elevate human life on one side?

[1] The saying is attributed to Professor Huxley.

No doubt, the historical study of religion is disappointing if we expect to find truth without any admixture of falsehood, or good untouched by evil, in any human institution. But Christians, at any rate, have been amply warned not to set their hopes so high as this. The kingdom of Heaven is compared to leaven hid in three measures of meal, till the whole be leavened. Two thousand years is a very short chapter in the lifetime of the human race. The "little leaven" introduced into it by Jesus Christ has not had nearly enough time to "leaven the whole lump." The kingdom of God is not merely an ideal laid up in heaven, but an active force, which can transform the world only by mixing thoroughly with it. There is no more unscientific procedure than to judge religion, or Christianity, by its failures and inconsistencies. It is possible to assail the Christian scheme altogether, as Nietzsche has done, as fostering an undesirable type of character. It is not justifiable to take examples of infra-Christian survivals in Christianity, and use them to discredit the religion of Christ. Such survivals, as I have tried to show, are only to be expected. Even if they are rooted out for a time, they are sure to reappear in degenerate societies and individuals. They may be satisfactorily accounted for by manifest defects in those who support them, and

cannot be considered normal outgrowths of Christianity.

I think that, without making a superstition of "progress," we may reasonably hope that we are coming to understand better what religion ought to be, and what Christ meant it to be. In the future, it should be possible to hold the truth with a smaller admixture of falsehood. One of the most hopeful signs is precisely that deep unsettlement and questioning of fundamentals which to some is so disquieting a symptom. It is, I believe, part of a process by which the religious spirit is becoming conscious of itself, passing out of the instinctive stage to the rational, self-determining stage. The result may be a temporary weakness, but if it be described as a "twilight of the gods," it is the twilight which precedes a new dawn, not a winter's night. When men understand better what religion is, they will be able to sift the wheat from the tares among their traditions, and to purge Christianity from any alien accretions which may still encumber it. But we must never forget that these hopes carry with them no assurance of their realisation. Our civilisation may decay, and our religion with it. God will make known the riches of His wisdom to that nation which best deserves to know them. It does not follow that the next revelation will be made to us, or even to any

European nation. The history of religion gives us many grounds for hope, and many for fear. It should inspire us with a chastened enthusiasm, a humble confidence, a resolute patience.

III.

RELIGION IN THE LIFE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

My subject to-day is the normal development of the religious consciousness in the individual life. It is a most difficult subject. The depths of the soul, as Heraclitus said, are unfathomable; and the religious life has its seat in the inmost recesses of the personality. And it has been only studied scientifically for quite a short time, though in Catholic countries a system of casuistry has been developed, to meet the requirements of the confessional, which is based on wide experience in dealing with individual cases. In our own Church the physicians of the soul are very ill trained for the work which they have to do. For the most part they rely on exhortations addressed to the congregation generally, which is something like trying to fill a number of narrow-necked bottles with water by repeatedly

dashing the contents of a bucket over them. The system, as a mode of spiritual therapeutics, has failed lamentably. Neither scolding nor lamenting nor arguing nor coddling has much effect on the hearers. We count the few hits, and forget the many misses. We do not feel, as we should, that every soul untouched by our teaching is a reproach to ourselves or our method. We want more knowledge of the various causes of unbelief, and more skill in diagnosis. Is it that the religious instinct is wanting, or undeveloped, or atrophied? And if so, what are the causes of the defect? Can it be that our patient is struggling against his truest convictions? or has he found elsewhere the comfort and support which we want him to seek and find in religion? It is very much to be desired that the clergy should assume the position, which should belong to them, of spiritual advisers and physicians. But this can hardly be, until they are trained in a much more special knowledge of religious psychology than is at present within their reach.

To-day, however, I must be content to generalise, knowing well how little good can be done by generalising. What I say will not fit any of you exactly. No two men are alike; no single man is in every respect exactly normal. But I hope that the sketch

which I shall give of the usual course which the religious life runs from childhood to manhood may put some of you on the right track towards understanding your own state, and may perhaps remove some difficulties which just now perhaps appear to you more serious than they really are.

Let us begin at the beginning, with the child. What form does religion generally take in the early years of life? It is customary to trace analogies between the mental state of the child and that of the savage, and as regards religion the resemblance does seem to be close. The child believes in a God because he has been told that such a Being exists. He readily believes that God sees and knows all that he does; that He is pleased if the child is obedient, and angry if he transgresses orders; and he prays in a perfectly naïve way for everything that he wants, from strength to overcome his faults to a fine day for his half-holiday. Religion at this stage is mainly individualistic, though the child may, and generally does, pray for his relations and friends as naturally as for himself. His notion of the character of God is inevitably based on that of his father, or of other people with whom he has come in contact. He is told that God can do anything, and miracles are no stumbling-block to him. The supernatural stories

of the Old Testament are accepted by him quite simply and literally, and he rather resents any rationalistic explanations as spoiling the story. This mental attitude makes the religious training of the child a very difficult problem. It is impossible to impart to a child the religious beliefs of an educated adult. And yet, if we teach him the simple stories which he is most willing to assimilate, and which lie ready to hand in the sacred literature of a primitive age, we are telling him a good deal which we do not believe ourselves, and which he will afterwards have to unlearn, with a possible unsettlement of all his religious beliefs. Too often the teacher is anxious to inoculate the child with the tenets of his particular sect or school, with the deliberate intention of making an impression on the plastic mind of the pupil which shall afterwards remain indelible. The education given in Roman Catholic schools is the best example of this. It attains its object in many cases; where it fails, the result is usually to alienate the pupil from religion altogether. In either case, it inflicts a severe injury upon the growing mind.

A great deal of the religiosity which parents delight to observe in their children is pure imitation, or innocent hypocrisy, the blame for which rests on the teachers. Children are apt mimics, and soon discover

that the repetition of a few phases, easily remembered, is the shortest road to the favour of those whom they wish to please. It would be wiser, I think, to be content with teaching obedience, the duty of combating childish faults, affectionateness and consideration for others, a constant remembrance that God's eye is upon us, and that His ears are always open to our prayers. If to this simple worship of our Father in Heaven we add the main outlines of the life of Jesus Christ—His love of little children, His gentleness and goodness and kindness, the suffering and death which He willingly endured for our sakes, His victory over death, and His continued love and care for all mankind, we are giving our children the religious teaching which is suitable to their age, and which will set them in the right way to be religious men and women. These lessons are quite easily understood and believed by a child, and they will not have to be unlearnt.

The history of civilisation—the progressive education of the human race—is not a fit subject for children. A child's strongest interest is in the experiences of its own life, in the fresh and wonderful disclosures of the world to which its eyes are gradually opening. If we had a little more courage, we should

break through the stupid traditions handed down from our barbarian ancestors, who were obliged to go to the conquered Romans for their literature, science, philosophy, and theology, because they had none of their own. We should see the absurdity of plunging the young mind into a remote and shadowy past, which resembles nothing in his own experience, and has no point of contact with the thoughts of his play-time. We should endeavour instead to begin with our own time and country, and then to illuminate and expand living interests by an ever-widening vista of history, science, and philosophy. And so in religion, instead of teaching the reluctant child "lists of Jewish kings; how many notes a sackbut has, and whether shawms have strings," we should try, partly by the help of "modern instances," to instil into his mind a generous admiration for the life of piety, duty, and service, and a resolve to be, before all else, a good Christian and a good citizen.

About the age of fifteen in a boy, and rather earlier in a girl, a great change comes over the entire personality. The spontaneous life of emotion and will breaks forth into activity. Ideas which have before been external to the consciousness take a new meaning, and become part of the life and character. Conscience becomes, to a greater extent, obedience

to what is right, and, to a less extent, obedience to what is commanded. The word "conviction" comes to have a meaning. It is at this time, either just before or just after puberty, that the majority of "instantaneous conversions" take place in those who have been taught to expect and look for such a crisis in their spiritual lives. In (probably) the majority of cases, this time of life is accompanied by a good deal of mental distress. John Stuart Mill, in his autobiography, tells us that he passed through this experience, "without any real desire for the things which I had been so carefully fitted out to work for; no delight in virtue or the general good, but also just as little in anything else. The foundations of vanity and ambition seemed to have dried up within me as completely as those of benevolence." The cause of these states is, no doubt, nervous overstrain, which may arise from several causes. While it lasts, its victim feels that "there is no good he likes to do," and his state is equally disagreeable to himself and his friends. Very often the morbid brooding which is one of the symptoms of this condition takes the form of a deep consciousness of guilt in the sight of God, while in other cases anxiety about future prospects, or hypochondriacal fears, torment the mind. Distress about religious doubts, and appre-

hensions of eternal reprobation, are also common. I think that from seventeen to nineteen is the most frequent age for these mental troubles; but they often occur earlier and later. They are easily accounted for by the strain put upon the organism by the physiological readjustments which take place during these years; but in some cases they are caused or augmented by bad habits, or by overwork. It should be known to everybody that nerve-fatigue shows itself in "worry, despondency, bad temper, emotionalism of various kinds, over-sensitiveness, lack of decision in small matters, morbid introspection, hyper-conscientiousness, increased susceptibility to temptations of appetite and of sex."[1] If these last temptations are yielded to, they aggravate the physical weakness which caused them, until the power of self-control and recovery is impaired or lost. Those who are troubled by abnormal irritability of the nerves, either in the form of ill-temper or of still worse kinds of excitement, must remember that the affected nerves can only recover their tone by being rested: each fall weakens the power of resistance.

I must just say a few words here on the extreme importance which Christianity attaches to personal purity. There is no

[1] Coe, *The Spiritual Life*, p. 73.

point in which Christian ethics are so contemptuously rejected by a large number of persons in Christian countries, or in which there is so much hypocrisy and concealment among those who outwardly accept the Christian standard. The root of the matter is the intense desire which religion has to protect the founts of life against whatever might destroy, waste, or pollute them. With this end Christianity declares that our bodies are temples of the Holy Ghost. It erects a sacred fence round the most dangerous places in our life. Reverence for the elemental mysteries of life is at the root of all religious interposition in matters of sex. Nietzsche is very wide of the mark when he accuses Christianity of despising and maltreating the body. Its deepest object is to preserve and increase vitality. With this motive, it visits with its sternest censure any assertions of the individual's right "to do what he will with his own" body, condemning suicide, and working steadily towards "the elimination of the monkey in man."

A neurotic condition is unfavourable to religious influences. Gusts of repentance and self-reproach may find vent in fervent prayer; but the steady, genial, happy life of faith, hope, and love, cannot exist amid these

frequent storms. Neither the mood of excitement nor the mood of depression is favourable to religion. Very often, too, the neurotic subject exhibits a strange and unnatural callousness in the sphere of the natural affections. In fact, we can well understand why medieval ethics classed "Acedia"—the typical neurotic diathesis—among the deadly sins. It destroys faith, hope, and love at one blow.

The "doubts" which are so common a feature of the adolescent period are by no means always symptoms of a morbid state. Sometimes they are merely the putting away of childish things, of naïve childish beliefs about God and the world, which have been learned at a mother's knee, or at the Sunday school. Much juvenile scepticism is also due to inexperience of life, producing a simple conceit which we should be taking too seriously if we called it intellectual pride. The youth, when he first begins to think for himself, is a remorseless logician, who is ready to argue out and decide problems of the utmost complexity, the deeper aspects of which entirely escape his notice. Sometimes our adolescent becomes a cynic, who, it appears, has seen through all the sham and humbug of human society. He knows that people are actuated only by the most selfish and sordid motives, which they endeavour to conceal by

means of hypocrisy. This is the most unamiable result of inexperience. In a few years he will have learnt that most people are to be trusted, unless you lean heavily on their weakest point. Meanwhile, of course, he is a sceptic in religion also; for no temper is so alien to Christianity as suspicion and disbelief in goodness. In other cases, "doubts" are only the stamp of moral frivolity. We have all, as Sir John Seeley, I think, says, listened to the sorry scrub who thinks that only intellectual difficulties have prevented him from being a St Francis. The new "pragmatist" school of philosophy has certainly done some good on this side, by showing how much our beliefs are determined by our dominant interests. The soul, as Marcus Aurelius says, is dyed the colour of its thoughts. We each of us make our own world by attending to some aspects of experience and neglecting others. The will does not, as is sometimes absurdly suggested, construct reality; but it does, to a very large extent, collect the materials out of which our own subjective construction of reality must be made. If we give nine-tenths of our time to a world in which physical causes reign supreme, we cannot expect that the laws of the spiritual life will appear more than shadowy phantoms, interfering with our observation of actual causes and effects. If we live a merely

superficial life, we cannot be surprised if the deeper currents are unobserved by us. The maxim of John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist, that such as men themselves are, such will God appear to them to be, is one which can hardly be quoted too often.

The irresponsible, homeless life of the University student surrounds him with an atmosphere which is not very favourable to religion, just because it is not the natural state for human beings. Clough enumerates among those who "think there is a God, or something very like Him," not only "those who dwell beneath the shadow of the steeple, the parson and the parson's wife," but "mostly married people, and almost everyone when age, disease, or sorrows strike him." Clough speaks lightly, but defenders of Christianity need not be ashamed to own that it thrives most naturally in the atmosphere of domestic affection. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

I must now ask you to consider with me the subject of *conversion*, which, whether normal or not, is an adolescent phenomenon. It is not an invention or discovery of Christianity. It was a Stoical doctrine that a man might be thoroughly bad in the morning, and thoroughly good in the evening, of the same

day.[1] All over the world, barbarians have religious rites for boys who are just entering man's estate, the theory being that some special revelation is granted at this period. Confirmation, which originally followed baptism without an interval, has in most parts of Christendom come to be administered at an age just before or just after the physiological change to which I have referred. And however great may be the influence exerted by suggestion, there must certainly be some basis in fact for the almost unanimous testimony of the sects in which sudden conversion is taught, that the normal age for it is about sixteen for boys, and a little earlier for girls.

Those who have been brought up by Wesleyans, or by Anglicans of pronounced evangelical views, have been taught to expect a sudden crisis about this time, which is described as instantaneous conversion. Wesley himself regarded this sudden crisis as not only normal but almost universal among true Christians. "In London alone," he writes, "I found 652 members of our society who were exceeding clear in their experience, and whose testimony I could see no reason to doubt. And every one of these, without a single exception, has declared that his deliver-

[1] Plutarch, *de Prof. in Virt.*, 1.

ance from sin was instantaneous; that the change was wrought in a moment. Had half of these, or one-third, or one in twenty, declared it was *gradually* wrought in them, I should have believed this with regard to *them*, and thought that some were gradually sanctified and some instantaneously. But as I have not found, in so long a space of time, a single person speaking thus, I cannot but believe that sanctification is commonly, if not always, an instantaneous work."[1] This testimony is exceedingly interesting, because it shows how widely religious experience differs in different intellectual strata, and in accordance with what people are led to expect. It is only a powerful and original mind which refuses to flow into the mould prepared for it. Such a mind was Newman's. In 1821, he tells us, he had been drawing up, at great length, an account of the evangelical process of conversion in all its stages, from conviction of sin to final perseverance, and he makes the following note: "I speak of conversion with great diffidence, being obliged to adopt the language of books. For my own feelings were so different from any account I have ever read, that I dare not go by what may be an individual case." And yet he had a critical experience at the age of fifteen, "an inward

[1] Tyerman's *Life of Wesley*, i. 463.

conversion of which," he says, "I am more certain than that I have hands and feet." It must be remembered that he was at this time under the influence of a strong Calvinist, Mr Walter Mayers. It would be impossible to form any estimate of the proportion of cases in which a sudden crisis is encountered about the age of puberty among those who have not been taught to expect anything of the kind. My own impression, formed, I admit, on insufficient data, is that an experience resembling what Methodists call sudden conversion would be found to occur only in a minority of cases where no strong suggestion had been made, but that in a very considerable number of cases a well-marked crisis of this kind would be found to occur quite spontaneously. Moreover, I believe that in a majority of cases among boys, though probably not nearly so often among girls, there is a period of storm and stress in the inner life about this time, which leaves the religious ideas modified considerably from what they were before. This agitation of the soul takes various forms. The mind generally oscillates between deep dejection and alienation from God, and the joyous feeling of being accepted by Him. Sometimes the boy feels an earnest desire to be up and doing; sometimes, and perhaps more often, the struggle is followed by a passive self-surrrender, which is the

immediate prelude to the peace and joy of recovered faith. But I do not think the "instantaneous" experience is the most wholesome or normal. Our Lord's parable about the seed growing secretly, which develops we know not how, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear, seems to me more in accordance with the regular laws of growth and with what we know of the gentle operations of the Holy Spirit. The sacramental system of the Church seems to me to offer a safer method of sanctification than the stormy crisis of instantaneous conversion. It is, I think, a matter of observation that those who have been taught to look to the Holy Communion as the instrument of grace and sanctification, arrive at the same spiritual condition by a safer, calmer, and saner process than that of the Methodists. For it is unquestionable that factitious excitement, created and encouraged by religious influence at this critical period, may, and frequently does, upset the mental balance to a very mischievous extent. This is especially the case when large numbers, all swayed by the same emotions, collect together. The customary inhibitions to uncontrolled excitement being removed, and the contagion of the crowd exerting its influence, the strange phenomena of religious ecstasy, which is now known to be pathological, soon appear. "Revival insan-

ity" is a well recognised mental disease. Even when things do not go so far as this, sterile emotions, frequently repeated, are most mischievous to the moral character. Bishop Butler has taught us that passive impressions are always weakened by repetition; and very often the tactics of the revivalist are, whether consciously or not, simply those of the hypnotist, and their effects simply those of hypnotic suggestion. The mystic's trance, induced by protracted prayer and fasting, and by riveting the attention on some one point, is another variety of the same expedient for reinforcing the will in its struggle against evil. I do not deny that a very valuable method of moral therapeutics has thus been empirically discovered; as a cure for bad habits it is probably unrivalled; but it is not a treatment to be prescribed promiscuously for all alike, and when applied to the immature, the healthy-minded, and those whose temperaments are unfit for it, it can hardly fail to do more harm than good.

Where there are no definite bad habits to be cured, I believe that the character develops most normally without the aid of anything like hypnotic suggestion. In ordinary cases, where the character has simply been undeveloped and shallow, "conversion" generally, I think, takes place somewhat later, and through one or other of two external agencies.

Either some strong and sweet affection occupies the whole nature with itself and the duties which grow out of it, driving out other less worthy passions and tastes which formerly held their ground in the soul; or, when a man finds his work, than which, as Carlyle says, there is no higher blessedness, all the energies of his nature are concentrated upon it, and he puts away the toys and idle fancies which have been a temptation to him. In both cases, conversion opens the way to a new life. In the new environment, the soul expands and develops. The man is changed by what we have called his conversion, not into a man different from what God made him, but into a man different perhaps from what he has made himself, and certainly into a man more like what God meant him to be.

If my view is right, there is nothing strange or unnatural in the state of chaos which often envelops a man's religious beliefs during the time when he is an undergraduate. The period of storm and stress which generally accompanies puberty may or may not have come to an end; but the period of reconstruction is not likely to have made much progress, because those two potent factors of the adult life, by which it is chiefly distinguished from adolescence—I mean love and marriage with all its consequences, and professional work—

have not yet been experienced. It is a frequent and not a very alarming state, when we find the religious sense weak and fitful and uncertain of itself, while the moral sense continues strong and able to control conduct, and the intellect (perhaps also the æsthetic or artistic faculty), is developing freely and independently. Still, after the twenty-first year, the period of reconstruction ought to have begun. The interplay of the vigorous intellect and fine taste with the strict and loyal moral will revives the religious sense. The very activity and independence of these faculties, and their collisions with each other, show us the necessity of a unifying principle which shall harmonise and control them. And this unifying principle must now, it is clear, be sought *within*. The old dogmas, which we learnt at our mother's knee, or at school, cannot help us unless we can find them within as part of our experience; and they must generally die before they can live again in this higher form.

> "For only by unlearning, wisdom comes,
> And climbing backward to diviner youth:
> What the world teaches, profits to the world,
> What the soul teaches, profits to the soul,
> Which then first stands erect with Godward face,
> When she lets fall her pack of withered facts,
> The gleanings of the outward eye and ear,
> And looks and listens with her finer sense:
> Nor truth nor knowledge cometh from without."

Sometimes the reconstruction consists in pouring new life into the old beliefs; sometimes, and perhaps more often, some of these beliefs drop off, or hang on like withered leaves, no longer part of the faith by which we live. But if the reconstructed faith is a Christian faith, there are two features which distinguish it.

The growth from spiritual childhood to spiritual maturity is a growth from obedience to reasonable service, or religious autonomy, and, at the same time, a growth from individualism to solidarity. The two are quite inseparable. Both depend on the same process of expansion in the personality. We began by receiving the moral law from without, as something imposed upon us, to which we had to submit without asking any questions. But as we grow older, we become more and more a law to ourselves, and we also take more and more our right place in the social organism. The two processes help each other. The fact of solidarity, perceived by the intellect, becomes also a moral ideal. It becomes the explanation of the moral law, and the motive for moral effort. We recognise that we are members one of another. That is a fact which involves a claim—the claim that we should love our neighbours as ourselves. We recognise that one member cannot suffer without the other members

suffering with it. That is a justification of a life of social service, a refutation of the notion that our duty to our neighbour is to mind our own business, and to avoid treading on his toes.

Christianity was founded (I say it reverently) by a young man, and as compared with other religions it is essentially the faith of the young adult. By this I mean that the most salient characteristics of Christianity, which may be described negatively as the revolt against legalism and the revolt against individualism, are the two chief new features which distinguish the religion of the man from that of the boy. When the period of storm and stress is over, the young man settles down into a religion in which he is a law to himself, to this extent at any rate, that he knows that things are forbidden because they are wrong, not wrong because they are forbidden. And he is also conscious of the birth of a larger self. The racial self becomes partially self-conscious in him. It is often supposed that Christianity is purely altruistic, and that growth in grace means a transit from egoism to altruism. This is not quite true. Our Lord bade us to love our neighbours as ourselves. He never bade us to hate or neglect or despise ourselves. The distinctive feature of Christian ethics is not the renunciation of self, in the sense in which some Asiatic

religions have inculcated renunciation, but the combination of an intense desire for self-expression with the desire for disinterested social service, and the way in which these two impulses are made to feed and strengthen each other. In some characters one is predominant, in others the other. A *man's* religion is much more apt to find its centre in self-expression than that of a woman, with whom the desire to help other individuals is very strong. But the two movements, of expansion and intension, must take a parallel course in every case where the development is really upon Christian lines.

One very characteristic change which comes over the religious consciousness in mature life is connected with the sense of sin. With a child, sin is simply disobedience to one who has the right to command and the power to punish. During the period of storm and stress, sin is the victory of the lower of two contending forces. It is a disease or an enslavement of the soul. But in the mature life, the isolated self, which so continually found itself in sharp conflict with the laws of life, is partially merged in a larger consciousness. We "lose ourselves," and in losing ourselves we lose the haunting consciousness of sin. We live in our work and our affections and ideals; we *are* what we are interested in. The sense of sin has fulfilled its normal course

by passing into self-forgetfulness and self-abnegation. We come to accept our limitations, internal as well as external. We "welcome each rebuff that turns earth's smoothness rough"; we even find comfort in that which we aspired to be and are not, as evidence that life has a higher potentiality than anything that we are able to achieve and compass in this present time. This is a mature phase of faith, which we cannot reasonably expect to find in the young, who quite rightly refuse to accept defeat or acknowledge any limitations to their possible future. It is only in middle age that most of us are able to say calmly of our rivals: "he must increase, but I must decrease." It is only in middle age that we can really understand the fine words of Goethe: "If during our lifetime we see that performed by others to which we ourselves felt an earlier call, but had been obliged to give up, with much besides, then the beautiful feeling enters the mind, that only mankind together is the true man, and that the individual can only be joyous and happy when he has the courage to feel himself in the whole."

There is, then, a sobriety of colour in the religion of the mature mind which distinguishes it from the brilliant hopes and gorgeous dreams of the young. We learn that we must submit and adapt ourselves; our wilful-

ness has been sharply chastened. The words of our Lord to St Peter—"when thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not"—are an apologue of human life. Our early hopes are seldom fulfilled; but we become content to give them up. We come to understand the paradox, that the only perfect freedom consists in service and submission to God. Lucan speaks of:

> "Libertas, cuius servaveris umbram,
> Si quidquid iubeare velis:"

but in religion it is the substance, and not the shadow of liberty, which is gained in this way. We no longer wish to control events, but to understand and co-operate with the Power which controls them. Petition forms a smaller and smaller part of our prayers. We know Christ less and less after the flesh. God ceases to be an object, and becomes an atmosphere. Our creed is simplified and intensified. There are a few fundamental religious facts of which we are quite sure, because we have experienced them. And among these facts is the power and vitality and intimacy of that spiritual presence, in ourselves and the world, which St Paul called Christ. The Christ of experience is at once

our moral ideal and the power which transforms us according to that ideal. He draws us to Himself. The normal development of religion culminates in that experience of complete harmony with a loving and wise spiritual Power which St Paul expresses in the simple words: "for me to live is Christ."

IV.

FAITH AND FACT

It is surely one of the most remarkable facts in the history of religion, that all the highest religions have their origin in the life of an individual. I do not mean merely that their adherents venerate the memory of their founder, as the various schools of Greek philosophy honoured the names of Pythagoras or Plato or Epicurus. The devotion which the Buddhist feels to Gautama, and the Mohammedan to Mohammed, is such, that if their hero were proved to them to be less than they believe him to be, they would feel that their religious faith was shaken to its base. And in the highest religion of all, Christianity, the place occupied by the historical Founder is much higher, and more intimately connected with the life of the religion, than even in Islam or Buddhism.

I said that this is a most remarkable fact. And so it surely is. For it is not easy to show how an event, or a series of events, in

the past can affect the truth of a religion. Either these events, to which so momentous an importance is attributed, form part of the regular series of occurrences in time, or they do not. If they do, they are only particular manifestations of laws which are always in operation, and which vindicate themselves continually in human experience. Except to the historian, it is not of much importance whether this or that particular occurrence has been accurately transmitted or not. It does not really matter to anyone by what route Hannibal crossed the Alps, nor whether Charles I. was beheaded kneeling or lying down. Even if the occurrence resembles a catastrophic ebullition of forces generally quiescent, such as an earthquake or eruption, it is not of vital importance that we should "believe rightly" about it. Pliny's account of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius is interesting to scientists, but the science of seismology would stand where it does if that document turned out to be a forgery. The *effects* of the eruption no doubt were permanent; but these effects—the ruin of Pompeii and the altered shape of the crater—are not affected at all by our theories about the occurrence. Things are what they are, however they came to be so. If, on the other hand, an event is purely miraculous, and outside the regular series of cause and effect,

its importance is in the inverse ratio to its singularity. An absolutely unique portent would be a "negligible quantity"; its importance would cease with its immediate effects.

Most people will readily admit that Jesus Christ "brought life and immortality to light"; that He made known to us the true relation in which we stand to our heavenly Father; that He promulgated His "new commandment" in a manner which has carried conviction to the conscience of civilised humanity; and that He exerted a unique influence over His disciples, which changed their lives, and kindled in them an enthusiasm which has altered the world's history. The teaching of St John and St Paul about His Person—even the tremendous claim that "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"—presents no difficulties to those who believe that God is a Spirit. But the doctrine, as commonly taught, that the death of Christ on Calvary, and His resurrection on the third day, altered the relations between God and man for all future time, is by no means easy to grasp. What *religious* significance can we attach to what only happened "once upon a time"?

This is an exceedingly difficult question. One or two illustrations will show what a strange problem it is. The Church of England has been agitated lately by a controversy about the birth of Christ from a virgin, which

is reported in two books of the New Testament. "Theologically," says an able Roman Catholic writer, "this doctrine has no essential connection with the Incarnation," for Christianity "has no wish to explain the Incarnation in pagan fashion as the result of a commerce between a divinity and a woman."[1] To adduce the fact that our Lord was born without a human father, as evidence of His Divinity, would certainly be to "argue in pagan fashion." And yet it is notorious that great distress and indignation are aroused by every suggestion that belief in this particular miracle should be regarded in the Church as non-essential, and public opinion, on the whole, agrees with those bishops who wish to prohibit their clergy from treating it as an open question. It is even assumed by many that those who find the evidence for the miracle inconclusive are equally uncertain about the Incarnation.

Or take the case of the efficacy of prayer. A good many years ago a suggestion was made by some men of science, that the efficacy of prayers for recovery from sickness should be tested. I believe the suggestion was that united prayer should be offered for the recovery of the patients in one ward or wing of a hospital. It could then be ascertained whether a larger percentage of recoveries

[1] Tyrrell, *Lex Orandi*, pp. 172, 174.

occurred in that ward, or wing, than in others where the previous condition of the patients had been much the same. The proposal was received by religious people with a chorus of indignation. But why? The proposed test seems a perfectly fair one, and easy to carry out. In many minds the controversy left an unpleasant impression that the Church shrinks from such tests because she knows that the facts are not what she declares them to be.

This suspicion is unjust. There is no wish either to deceive or to be deceived among the earnest religious people who cling to beliefs which they will not expose for dissection. The explanation of their attitude must be found in the unique character of the religious symbol. It is something which is not believed on ordinary evidence, which will not be correlated with other facts, and the significance of which cannot be logically demonstrated. With many persons, no doubt, the value attached to such facts depends partly on their strangeness. Thinkers like Amiel have been driven to the conclusion that "faith consists in the acceptance of the incomprehensible," and that "the efficacy of religion lies in the unforeseen, the miraculous, the extraordinary." This is far from being true of Christianity as held by thoughtful people, in our day at any rate; but the simple and uneducated still revel in signs and wonders,

and exhaust a fertile imagination in adding to them. But it would be a great mistake to regard belief in miracles as merely the result of a craving for "signs from heaven." Among those who accept them there are many who care little for their evidential aspects, as is shown by their reluctance to apply ordinary principles of criticism to the narratives.

It seems plain that these doctrines do not belong to the sphere of the understanding only; and that even what appear to be straightforward statements of fact, historical propositions, are something more, or something less, or something different. They seem to float between the seen and the unseen, interpreting the one by the other, giving us concrete images in the place of laws, the particular in the place of the universal, the temporal and local in the place of the eternal.

It is important to remember that this symbolic, representative character does not belong only to the presentation of saving truths in the form of a series of events. When we turn from Christian Messianism—that simple dramatisation of the good news as an episode in time—to the Christianity of the Alexandrian divines, we find parables of a very different kind, but still parables. The presentation of religious truth under the form of a series of events, some past and some future, must always seem inadequate and

unsatisfying to the educated man. It is, or was then, more natural to him to envisage the relation of the "is" to the "ought to be"—the human to the divine—as one of shadow to substance, of appearance to reality. Neither the local antithesis of earth and heaven, nor the idea of a deliverance achieved once for all in history, appealed to him so much as the contrast between the spiritual world of unchanging reality and the fleeting shadows of time. For him the Lamb has been slain from the foundation of the world, and the crucifixion and resurrection were most often thought of as the path by which the soul must follow its Lord.

The suggestion may be hazarded by the way, that these three possible methods of envisaging the deep reality of the *beyond* have their special affinities in our faculties. The figure of shadow and substance appeals most to the intellect, that of time to the moral sense, that of place, it would seem, to the feelings. But all alike contain an unreal symbolic element, and we must choose (to put it plainly) between leaving them incomplete and making them partially untrue.

In the history of the Church it is plain to any intelligent student that the public teaching of Christianity has been a rough and ready amalgamation of these three systems of representation. Under the form of time we

have the series of Divine interpositions in past history, and, in the future, the last judgment and the inauguration of a new order, to continue through innumerable æons. Under the form of place, we have heaven and hell, habitually conceived as geographical expressions, and we have holy places in this world. Under the form of shadow and substance, body and soul, the seen and the unseen, spiritual religion, in its various forms, has found ample room for itself within the Church.

It would be an easy and unprofitable task to show that these symbolic systems are very imperfectly fused, and in fact clash with one another in many ways. We would not really have it otherwise. If any one of them was proved to be an exhaustive account of reality, we should in truth be filled with dismay. None of the three is nearly good enough to be wholly true. Our treasure is in earthen vessels. "The kingdom of heaven is like" each one of them; but the time is not yet come when Christ will no more speak unto us in proverbs, but will show us plainly of the Father. Even the apostles, to whom the promise was made, received only an "earnest" of the full revelation. "Now we see by riddles (or symbols), as in a mirror," says St Paul. The more immediate revelation is yet to come.

The peculiar character of the religious symbol has received much attention lately. Within the last few years certain Roman Catholic divines have ventured to draw a sharp distinction between truths of faith and truths of fact, and have laid the foundations of a new apologetic on this distinction. Their position requires explanation. It is not easy for the plain man to see how a proposition, which purports to belong to one order, can be true because it belongs to another. But the dialectic of writers like Loisy and Tyrrell can be better understood if we note its connection with the movement in contemporary thought towards a *volitive* psychology and metaphysics. It is considered by many philosophers that Hegel and his numerous followers left out the *will* far too much in their scheme of reality and in their conception of the Divine nature. They think that the time has come for a revolt against intellectualism, to make room for a philosophy which, though largely based on Kant, owes much to the new science of experimental psychology. The will, in the more extreme representatives of this school, becomes the constitutive principle of the universe. The "will-world" is the only real world. So in Tyrrell's very able book, *Lex Orandi*, the "will-world" and the "spirit-world" are used interchangeably. "The world of appearance," he says, "is simply

subordinate to the real world of our will and affections. . . . In this region truth has a practical and teleological sense."[1] The usual "mistakings of faith-values for fact-values are to be ascribed to that almost ineradicable materialism of the human mind which makes us view the visible world as the only solid reality. . . . The real criterion of the religious truth of these beliefs . . . is: Do they bring the will into a right attitude Godwards?"[2] Loisy is even more explicit. "Historical researches only tend to prove and represent *facts*, which cannot be in contradiction with any dogma, precisely because they are facts, while dogmas are representative ideas of faith."[3] In addressing persons of intelligence, it is hardly necessary to explain in what manner this disparagement of the visible order and its standards of truth is meant to succour a distressed faith. The dogmas of the Church are cut clean asunder from the "subordinate" world of appearance, so that no verdict of history or criticism can affect them in the least degree. The question whether the events ever went through the form of taking place would thus seem to be frivolous and irrelevant.

[1] *Lex Orandi*, pp. 54, 55.

[2] *Id.*, p. 192.

[3] *Autour d'un petit livre*, p. 51.

This attitude towards the historical side of Christianity is not confined to Catholic apologists. Wide as are the differences which separate the German School of Protestant Theology from even the most liberal Romanism, there is not much to distinguish the "value-judgments" of Ritschlianism from the maxim "*lex orandi, lex credendi*" which gives the title to Tyrrell's chief book. Both alike find religious truth not so much in the harmony of our beliefs with objective fact, as in their harmony with the needs of our own souls. The interesting American group who are working, on almost virgin soil, in the statistical investigation of religious psychology, are equally indifferent or sceptical about objective truth. They are content to treat religion as "a mass of ascertainable states of consciousness." It is plain, then, that we have to deal with a widespread tendency, which has on its side much of the acutest thought of our generation, while it is welcomed also by some well-meaning religionists who only understand that somehow or other it gives them leave to subscribe to the formularies of orthodox theology with a clear conscience, and puts the ark of God somewhere where the Philistines cannot get at it. Nevertheless, there are objections to this method of apologetic, which at least deserve to be seriously weighed.

First, it does not satisfy those who really believe in the supernatural occurrences, which it is proposed to maintain in consideration of their "prayer-value." Such persons, as I have just said, often fail to see the drift of the new apologetic. They do not understand that the literal truth of their revered dogmas is being quietly surrendered. But, if they do understand it, they are shocked and angry. They protest that they care nothing for the subjective value of dogma; what they alone prize is its objective, literal truth. If these dogmas were, as Loisy claims, the product of the will and affection of the Church, the Church certainly adopted and still maintains them, not as belonging to the "will-world" at all, but as external, objective facts, independent of the needs, wishes, and affections of any human being. Those who believe *ex animo* in the miracles affirmed by the Creeds are not Kantian philosophers; neither were those who compiled those instruments. On the other hand, those who regard these dogmas as merely symbols, however much they may exalt the affirmations of the will and affections as possessing a higher degree of reality than those which proceed only from the understanding, will, if they are quite honest with themselves, acknowledge that the "prayer-value" of the supernatural dogmas is, for them, but small. The new apologetic, there-

fore, seems to depend for its success on its obscurity. The simple believer, distressed by the advance of liberalism, welcomes it until he understands it, when he repudiates it with energy; the philosopher does not, as a rule, find those particular symbols necessary, or even very helpful, to his own faith.

The school which we are criticising does not seem to have faced the question why the supernatural dogmas are valued so highly. They would admit, I suppose, that the historical events are valued as the sacraments or vehicles of spiritual and eternal truths. But a sacrament is not the same thing as a poetical or imaginative representation. The outward sign is as much a part of a sacrament as the thing signified; and in the case of these dogmas, if the outward and visible sign were deprived of its visibility and externality, which is what the new apologetic contemplates, it would, for the large majority of Christians, lose all its sacramental value as well. Of course the subjective efficacy of the sacrament does not *prove* that there is a real, essential connection between the sacrament and the thing signified. In some cases the association may be external, the result of early education. It follows that the argument from the sacramental value of the dogmas cannot be pushed further than to say that they are thereby proved to be possible and adequate vehicles of

the truths with which they are associated. And, on the other side, it is a mistake to suppose that the value of the symbol would remain unimpaired if its reality as a "truth of fact" were surrendered.

But there is another reason why the miracles are jealously maintained. If they are really miracles, they not only favour, but necessarily imply, the view that God occasionally intervenes to correct the order of nature in the interests of morality and justice. This belief is dear to many persons, and they would be most unwilling to give it up. For them, the question behind the dispute about miracles is whether we are yoked to an inexorable necessity; whether, in Harnack's words, we are "shut up within a blind and brutal course of nature." Would not, it is asked, the same arguments which are brought against the literal ascension of Christ be equally fatal, if pressed home, to free-will, the personality of God, and the eternal world? Do they not lead straight to materialism? This is one of the chief considerations which make the majority of religious people still cling to miracles.

The whole question of determinism bristles with difficulties. I doubt, however, whether belief in a few miracles in the past gives any relief to these apprehensions. In the so-called ages of faith, unaccountable inter-

ferences with the natural order were believed to be part of the system under which we live. The only difficulty about miracles in those days was to distinguish the Divine miracles, which every saint might expect to witness if not to initiate, from the very numerous diabolical counterfeits. It was to reduce the number of these maleficent miracles that hundreds of ugly old women were burnt every year as witches. John Wesley, who believed that "earthquakes are caused by sin," also believed in witchcraft, and was perhaps the last man of any note who has openly professed this conviction. The fact is, that the victory of the belief in the uniformity of nature, as a safe working hypothesis, has been so complete, that we can hardly realise to ourselves the state of mind which was almost universal in the Middle Ages. In those days, belief in miracle was not a sign of piety or a test of orthodoxy; it was part of the accepted opinion as to the way in which the world is governed. If we could go back to this state of opinion, we should no doubt be delivered from the tyranny of natural law; though we should have to pay a heavy price for our imaginary liberty. But scarcely anyone thinks it either possible or desirable to do this. For the most part we are agreed that we now live under a dispensation in which no such infractions

of natural order take place. Is it, then, any great consolation to believe that two thousand years ago the uniformity of the physical world was less rigid? Our escape from the toils of fatalism must surely be achieved in some better way than this. Some theologians are even willing to grasp the nettle boldly. "The mechanical or determinist view of the world," says Tyrrell, "is just the one which harmonises best with the exigencies of the higher spiritual life. Only so far as the world is law-bound and regular, are we able to deal with it at all. In a world governed by caprice, or in which endless and incalculable relaxations of law were permitted, we should remain children for ever. This vast determinism is the evil which is the condition of our goodness, the foe whose conquest is our glory. In this labour we feel ourselves fellow-workers of that indwelling God whom we must think of as crucified with us on the cross of this ruthless determinism which His own hands have prepared to be the instrument of our deliverance."[1]

To return to the new apologetic. There is a further objection to its method, which some people feel to be even more serious than those which have been already mentioned. It seems to involve a very deep scepticism about our chances of coming into relation with ultimate

[1] *Lex Orandi*, pp. 135-138 (abridged).

truth.[1] If the intelligence is degraded into a mere servant and instrument of the will, and if the world projected by the intelligence is to be called a mere epiphenomenon of the "will-world" (turning the tables on the materialistic monists), we are left to drift, without rudder or helmsman, upon an unknown sea. Sabatier's statement that clearness of thought and energy of will vary inversely with each other, seems to me like a confession of the most desperate pessimism, in the mouth of a thinker. Surely the main difference between an educated and an uneducated man is the extent to which the will and emotions are controlled by the intellect. If the will is to be regarded as not only the selecting principle among the multitude of impressions which it is open to us to admit or reject, but as the determining and constitutive principle of reality, there is no extravagance of credulity to which we may not fall a prey.[2] And we shall certainly find, if we yield ourselves to this philosophy, the divergence between the "will-world" and the "world of appearance"

[1] "Pragmatism," says Prof. Carveth Read in his *Metaphysics of Nature*, "is a kind of scepticism, as any doctrine must be that puts the conviction of reason solely upon any other ground than cognition, whether it be action or feeling."

[2] "Needs and desires of themselves give us no standard of value. It will not do to alter the multiplication table because we are getting into debt."—Ritchie, *Philosophical Studies*, p. 69.

widening continually, till the contradiction becomes intolerable. I am not prepared to go quite so far as Jastrow, who says that "the whole process of the religious development of man may be viewed as a constant struggle between the emotions and the intellect, in which the latter gradually obtains the mastery."[1] A purely intellectual cult, as he says himself, would degenerate into a cold scholastic exercise, devoid of all real influence on the individual. But the distinction, so much insisted on by Coleridge, between the understanding and the higher reason, should be maintained; and it is impossible to identify the higher reason with the will. We must, I think, believe, as a necessary postulate or act of faith, that our higher reason is in vital ontological communion with the Power which lives and moves in all things, and most chiefly in the spirit of man. Such an initial act of faith I believe to be the necessary starting-point of all religious faith that deserves the name. Scepticism can never be parent of faith, but only of a deeper scepticism.[2]

[1] *The Study of Religion*, p. 280.

[2] A further objection to this philosophy, which I feel strongly myself, is that it leaves no place for disinterested, impersonal curiosity, the love of knowledge for its own sake. It would seem, on this hypothesis, to be nonsense to speak of knowledge for its own sake. But to many minds, and not the least noble, the attainment of knowledge is the

But this act of faith does not remove our difficulties. The higher reason, which is the expression of the whole nature of man directed to man's highest aims and interests, projects a world which does not altogether agree with the "world of appearance," of which natural science takes cognizance. We cannot express the spiritual life in terms of molecular physics, nor find room for good and evil, beauty and ugliness, in a purely mechanical order. Natural science is free from inconsistency because it is an abstract study; it confines itself to the relations which prevail in the phenomenal world. Metaphysics can perhaps avoid contradictions only by giving us bare outlines. But religion, which is bound to include and take account of the whole of man's life, which can count nothing that is human alien to itself; religion, which is not concerned with the grey hues of theory, but with the green leaves of the "golden tree of life,"[1] can neither purchase consistency by self-limitation, nor avoid the pitfalls of concrete experience by dwelling amid the bloodless universals of the ideal world. Religion

purest of all enjoyments, a happiness which only ceases to be pure when that motive of self-interest, which according to the pragmatists is its only possible creator, obtrudes itself on our notice.

[1] "Grau, theurer Freund, ist alle Theorie,
Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum."—Goethe.

must come down to earth, and mix with men. It must speak in their own language to the men that sit on the wall. It must become all things to all men, if by any means it may save some. If human minds are weak, it must appear to share their weakness; if they are offended, its cheek must burn in sympathy.

Must we admit that inasmuch as religion is neither science, nor philosophy, nor ethics, nor art, but an improvised synthesis of all these aspects of truth, existing for practical purposes, an irrational element must necessarily inhere in it, since it assumes and anticipates the resolution of contradictions which have not really been reconciled? In a sense this is so. Religion is pledged to the service of a truth as yet but dimly seen; it pursues an ideal which is not yet an object of knowledge. It makes no pretence to be a complete and rounded theory of existence, which leaves nothing unexplained. The imperfection of our knowledge is so manifest, that a complete theory of existence would be self-condemned. Even of physical nature we can only reproduce in our minds a rough diagram, an affair of dotted lines and conjectural strokes, compiled from the fragmentary data of our meagre experience. How much more inadequate, or rather how full of strange errors, must be our mental picture of the spiritual world, of which

we know so very little, and which we can only represent under alien images. If our physical universe is a mental construction analogous to an impression of a tune played on an instrument of which half the notes are dumb, our spiritual universe is like an attempt to render into human speech the sound of many waters, faintly heard as they beat upon a distant shore.

Religion does not profess to explain everything. It is precisely because there *are* ragged edges in our experience, places where our consciousness is at discord with itself, that religious faith is needed. "When that which is perfect is come," the office of religion, as we know it, will be ended. But this admission of an irrational element in religion must not be abused. We must not make the relativity of all knowledge a plea for discrediting one kind of knowledge as compared with another kind. Religion is not indifferent to any revolt against her doctrines, whether it proceeds from the understanding, or the affections, or the moral sense. It is not a mark of piety, or of loyalty, or of humility, to crush and trample on the honest protests of our reason. The boast *Credo quia absurdum est*, is not, we may dare to say, well pleasing to the God of truth. Honest difficulties are not to be stifled. The "sacrifice of the intellect" is an act of self-mutilation

which disqualifies men for ever from the true priesthood of humanity. Religion is not indifferent to these discords in her symphony. She feels them as a pain and a reproach; she labours patiently to reduce them to harmony; but never can she hope to do so by silencing the discordant string. The presence of these discords, we may say, is the reason for religion's existence; but her whole energies are bent upon removing them.

Can we now arrive at a clear notion of "faith," in the religious sense? The word is too often taken to mean assent to a proposition which is partly doubtful, and assent to which is therefore regarded as meritorious. The use of the word in the current religious dialect fluctuates between this unworthy meaning and that of an abiding attitude of the soul, which is perhaps best described in St Paul's words, "We believe that all things work together for good to those who love God." The two ideas are so unlike each other that it is difficult to maintain that they are mutually interdependent. St Paul unquestionably believed in the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ, but it is perfectly clear that his faith was not based on the external evidence for that occurrence, about which he never seems to have troubled himself. The vision on the road to Damascus convinced him that Jesus was alive, and in glory; but

he correctly describes this experience when he says that "it pleased God to reveal His Son *in me*."[1] It was only the most intense of a number of visions in which "the Spirit of Jesus" manifested to him His presence, His power, and His love. The resurrection of Christ was not, for St Paul, a probable event to which we can show our piety by assenting as if it were certain. It was a certain truth, the supreme manifestation of a law which each one of us can verify for himself. It is the Christ in us who bears witness to the Christ for us. Unfortunately, these experiences are not effective as evidence in popular controversy, though it is a mistake to say that they have no value except to those who possess them. When the Church was challenged for proofs, it became necessary to lay stress, not on the inner conviction, but on the external events with which it was associated. In the heat of controversy it was forgotten that in its true nature faith is its own evidence and justification, that it is a primary formative principle, and that any apparent derivation of it is inevitably a circular process.[2] Under Catholicism, it be-

[1] Even if, as many good scholars maintain, "in me" only means "in my case," it cannot be denied that St Paul always insists on the personal, spiritual, immediate character of the revelation granted to him.

[2] *Cf.* T. H. Green, *The Witness of God*, p. 75.

came an act of submission, a declaration of fealty; under Protestantism, an act of trust (*fiducia*) in the good faith of a Divine transaction. In a rationalistic age, faith descended to a still lower plane, by professing itself to rest upon proofs which appeal only to the understanding—the occurrence of wonders in the physical world, and the prediction of future events. This is the worst of all degradations that faith can undergo: for not only is it impossible to prove in such a manner the occurrences in question, but if they were so proved, the religious value of the proof would be nothing at all. We must go back to the conception of faith which we find in St Paul, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Clement of Alexandria is also helpful. He defines faith as "a voluntary anticipation (προλήψις) of things unseen," "an unifying assent to an unseen object," "the foundation of a rational choice." These are all good, and so is his phrase that faith is "compendious knowledge," and knowledge "scientific faith." Faith, as I have said elsewhere, is an experiment which ends in an experience. The indwelling Christ, and the necessity of dying and rising again with Him, dying to the "old man" and putting on the "new man," are matters of experience. When we have made these experiences our own, we can form our opinion about the gospel miracles. To the majority of those

who are qualified to speak of spiritual death and resurrection, it seems suitable, or even inevitable, that Christ should have died and risen again in the physical order. Others are content with the words from Revelation: "I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore." For my own part, I think that questions as to the *manner* of the Incarnation and of the Resurrection may safely be left alone, by those who are convinced that the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled among us. It rests with men of science to say what is or is not possible in the physical order. But science has no commission to produce an ideal world-construction on a materialistic basis. It is as great a blunder for science to impose its mechanical order upon the spiritual life, as for religion to impose its notions of freedom upon the natural order.

I know very well that this discussion of the miraculous element in Christianity must seem vague and inconclusive. I spoke just now about ragged edges in our knowledge, and this question of miracles is just now the most ragged edge that we have to deal with. To make a clean sweep of supernaturalism is very tempting to many who realise how large a number of earnest and thoughtful people are prevented from accepting Christianity just by this one

obstacle, and how little difference it would make to themselves if the whole apparatus of miracle were swept away. But I do not think that theirs is the normal religious attitude, even if we confine our attention to well educated persons. Religious men of the type which I have in my mind do not wish to introduce caprice or chaos into the order of nature. They would send for a sanitary inspector, not for a priest, if typhoid fever broke out in their houses. But they think it natural and proper that the Incarnation of the Son of God should have been attended by some external signs as unique as the nature and character of Him who was born on Christmas Day, and that His victory over death should be signalised in the visible as well as in the invisible world. Without this belief, their faith in the Person of Christ would seem to them to float vaguely in the air, without sufficient attachment to the world in which we live, to have any constraining power over their lives. I believe there are many who, on intellectual grounds, have rejected the whole of the miraculous element in the Gospels, and who have found that in moments of trial and temptation their spiritualised theology has failed to support them so well as the narrower but stronger faith of the simple believer. Religious idealism may be the faith of the "mind's best hours"; but it

seems often to fail us at a pinch, vanishing into thin air when we need a prop to lean on. You will remember Wordsworth's splendid metaphor :—

> "'Tis the most difficult of tasks to keep
> Heights which the soul is competent to gain.
> Man is of dust : ethereal hopes are his,
> Which, when they should sustain themselves aloft,
> Want due consistence : like a pillar of smoke,
> That with majestic energy from earth
> Rises, but having reached the upper air,
> Melts, and dissolves, and is no longer seen."[1]

Here, then, with a plea for suspense of judgment, I leave the very difficult subject of the supernatural element in religious belief. The points at issue are not of vital importance. They are theories about the manner in which the Christian revelation was made ; they are not the revelation itself. The revelation itself is the life of the Divine Word poured into humanity, and showing itself as a new mode of believing, feeling, and acting with regard to God, the world, and our own souls. Those who have been baptised with His Spirit have a better witness than that of signs and wonders that in Him the Word of God has indeed tabernacled among men, and triumphed over death. What that Incarna-

[1] *Excursion*, Book iv.

tion, and that victory, involved in the physical order is a secondary matter, and one on which we are surely not obliged to dogmatise.

The trial of faith consists largely in maintaining a right attitude to these unsolved difficulties which I have called ragged edges. The expedients which I have deprecated are, to discredit as worthless or deceptive the affirmations of one part of our experience, in order to restore certitude and harmony to those of another; to regard all knowledge as purely auxiliary to our practical aims for the time being, and as having no necessary relation to any objective truth beyond or outside of those practical aims; and to intercalate acts of God among the processes of nature, as if God could only assert Himself by violating or suspending His own laws. The acceptance of unsolved antinomies is no insult to our intelligence if we remember that infinity, whether of time or place, is a conception which involves contradictions; and that the dualism of God and the world, here and beyond, visible and invisible, matter and spirit, physics and ethics, is so persistent and inevitable that we can only regard it as the varied expression of an opposition which is inherent in our nature. Discouragement at the discovery of these antinomies should give way to

a feeling of satisfaction, because the fact that we are able to pass such a condemnation on the very forms of our knowledge as finite beings, makes it evident that we have within us a dim consciousness of the Infinite and Absolute; and this is a glorious promise for the future. The underlying unity is all the while within us; it will unfold itself by degrees as we advance in knowledge and grace. But as the quest is an infinite one, it can never be fully achieved while we live here. Only by complete self-conquest and self-transcendence can we pierce within the veil.

> "Von der Gewalt die allen Wesen bindet
> Befreit der Mensch sich der sich überwindet."

And such a victory is not won on this side of the grave. Yet all the while we are striving, not only to attain to the unattainable that is far away from us, but to express the inexpressible that is very near to us. Our journey is not only through Nature to God, but from God into Nature. We are sent into the world to reproduce, so far as possible, "in terms of the finite and relative, that Absolute and Infinite whose secret presence is given us by the religious sense."[1] Here again we

[1] Tyrrell, *Lex Orandi*, p. xxii.

come upon that double movement which seems to be a law of the higher life, or of the manner in which it appears to our thought.

What is the practical upshot of all this? Are we, in despair of a thoroughly rational faith, to return to the simple lessons which we learned in childhood, to the creed of our grandmother Lois and our mother Eunice? Or shall we stifle our questionings once for all by making our submission to Authority? I do not think that either course will or ought to bring us satisfaction. Rather we should hold fast to the assurance that we have within us the earnest of a final solution of all our problems, remembering at the same time that the very magnitude and sublimity of our quest makes it impossible that we should fully achieve it. The obligation remains to make our faith as spiritual as possible; that is to say, to hold to the most spiritual creed which we can *live by*. The spiritual is not that which has no outward and visible sign, but that which is not confined and cramped by the local, the temporal, the particular, the accidental. We have seen that religion is beset by various pathological tendencies, and that the higher religions are in constant danger of reverting to one or other of the lower types which they have left behind.

Constant vigilance is needed to keep our faith worthy of our best selves. It seems strange that a warning should be necessary to take our religion seriously. But it is needed. The frivolity of much of the so-called religious interest which we see about us is extraordinary. The religious man is not always sternly engaged in the pursuit of the true or the practice of the good. Imagination, pleasure in the story, the desire to be edified or amused, the artistic faculty, all come into play. Observe the attitude of very many people towards popular superstitions. They behave as if they believed them, but they will not investigate them, and apparently care very little whether they are true or not. The fondness of children for fairy-stories is by no means outgrown when they are older. Much of the present religious revival in the Latin countries seems to be of this half-serious character. It is æsthetic rather than religious. And in our own country, among some of the unemployed rich, religion is little more than an occasional diversion. The love of beauty has its place in religion, but it should be the beauty of holiness, which, as in Plato's philosophy, is the conductor into the inner shrine of truth and goodness. Most emphatically, religion is not to be

"taken up" for pleasure, or even for consolation.

> "Religion's all or nothing; it's no mere smile
> Of contentment, sigh of aspiration, sir—
> No quality of the finelier tempered clay
> Like its whiteness or its lightness; rather, stuff
> Of the very stuff; life of life, and self of self."[1]

The "truth" of religion must reside in its *dynamic* relation to absolute truth. By this I mean that though our beliefs may contain a large admixture of myth, of illusion, of illogical accommodation, we must be content if they compose the best creed that we can live up to, and if they continually point forward and lead us up to something better and truer. A living faith always has this quality of growing and changing with our growth. It is incomplete because we, thank God, are incomplete. Mankind is still "in the making"; we know in part and we prophesy in part. The witness of the *heart* to God has long made its deep and tender tones heard throughout the world. The witness of the *conscience*, the "stern lawgiver" who "yet doth wear the Godhead's most benignant grace," has caused its trumpet-call to sound during long ages. The full witness of the *reason* is yet to come. Latest born of our faculties, it has been the slowest to reach

[1] R. Browning.

maturity, the last to come to complete self-consciousness. But it has its goal (which in a sense is also its starting point) in God's own truth; and as faith leads us onward towards the beatific vision which shall one day be ours, it will take away and give us back, transmuted and purified, each of our early beliefs in turn, till nothing is left that has not been baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire.

V.

THE RELIGION OF CHRIST

In what sense can there ever be a new religion? The maxim, *Natura nihil facit per saltum*, is as true in this sphere as in any other. Those apologists who have thought to establish the truth of Christianity as a Divine revelation, by depicting a sudden and startling change in the morality of Europe when it became Christian, are in error. Apparent moral revolutions of this kind are rare, superficial, and transitory. Great movements have always been long prepared for; revelation only publishes to the world the secret which has been trembling on many lips. The origins of Christianity are no exception to this universal rule. There was no breach of continuity in the first century. The treasures of ancient civilisation, including its philosophical ideas and religious traditions—the glory of Greek thought and of Hebrew devotion—were not lost nor rejected. They formed the necessary foundation for

the new fabric. And human nature remained the same, after as before the revelation, incapable, as it always is, of learning or retaining much that is new, or retaining much that it has learned. Arising on Jewish soil, Christianity retained the dominant forms of thought which belonged to the Jewish religion. The expectation of a Messiah—the idea of a theocracy or kingdom of God—the current eschatology—were all taken up into Christianity. These ideas were to a large extent Christianised, and transformed in the process; but they are not themselves part of the new revelation; they belong to the soil in which it grew. The question whether Jesus really was the expected Messiah is a question which had a meaning then; it can hardly be said to have a meaning now. The Jews had been educated by their prophets to expect a national deliverer, a representative of all that was best in the chosen people. The vague notion of "the Servant of Jehovah"—the nation idealised—had become more and more the portrait of an individual. Possibly the life of Jeremiah, that courageous patriot and persecuted witness to the truth, helped to suggest the later idea of the Servant, which we find in the second Isaiah—the idea of a single representative of the nation, who should not only revive and unite the offices of prophet, priest, and king, but

should add to those honours the crown of martyrdom. The noble prophecies, which describe the sufferings and glorification of this ideal figure, were so completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ, that they seem to us to have been written for Him. And so, in a sense, they were. Christ came into conflict with the priests, but He placed Himself in the line of prophetic development, and claimed that the deepest spirit of His nation was on His side. He knew well the only possible conditions under which He could fulfil His purpose. He came not to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfil them. That is, He took the existing religious system, with its beliefs and symbols and ritual and sacred literature, and built His Church upon it, in such a way that the new dispensation might even seem the only logical conclusion and consummation of the old. His method was clearly indicated in the parable of the leaven hid in three measures of meal, which by degrees leavens the whole lump. In its insignificant beginnings the Gospel resembled a grain of mustard seed, or grain sown in a field. It was to grow day by day, almost unperceived, till it reached its glorious maturity. The soil in which the seed was sown was that of existing institutions; it was to be known, not by its beginnings, but by its fruits.

Christianity, then, did not appear as a cut and dried scheme, sent down from the clouds. Its charter must necessarily be, for all time, the record of the words and deeds of the Master. But by carefully putting His words above His deeds, and by such utterances as "The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life," our Lord showed that He did not wish even the records of His ministry to tie and fetter the natural development of His Church. His disciples should do "greater works than these," after His visible presence was withdrawn. He nowhere promises that they shall speak greater words than His; but He does promise that the Holy Spirit shall interpret them more fully than was then possible, and guide the Church into all truth, as men were able to bear it.

This gospel is still almost in its infancy. Two thousand years is a very short time in the life of humanity. It is almost certain that a far longer period remains to mankind for further developments, than the span which separates us from the Galilean ministry. This is a thought which has hardly yet become familiar. Until the present generation, the majority of religious people regarded the "second coming of Christ" as an event which was more likely than not to occur within the next few centuries; while rationalists were contemptuous about Christianity, and as-

sumed that its course was nearly run. Now, both views are out of date. We have no reason to suppose that our planet is in much danger of destruction by colliding with any other heavenly body; and though the surface of the earth is gradually cooling, it will be habitable for tens of thousands of years yet. Christianity, then, is still a mere child. It is much too early for us to prophesy to or about the future age which shall see the Kingdom of God come with power. We are still in the stage of tentative experiments. The world generally is not yet convinced of the truth of Christ's view of life. It is not yet willing or able to give it a fair trial. When the conviction has become general that the Christian standard of values is the true one, the time will have arrived for applying it to special problems. We cannot expect Christianity to regenerate society until society wishes for this kind of regeneration. For the same reason, I do not admire the rather shallow method of apologetics, of which Brace's *Gesta Christi* is a favourable specimen. We cannot isolate Christianity from other social influences, in order to ascribe all moral improvements to Christianity, and all social evils to the unleavened residuum. At the present time, when Christianity feels that it is on its trial, there is too great a tendency to adduce what it has done for human progress as a plea for

acquittal and a ground for support. Sometimes our religion is "cried up" as if its defenders were holding an auction of its effects. Such methods are degrading. Christianity is not an organisation intended to lighten the work of the police, or to make the working man comfortable. It claims to be the one true interpretation of existence in space and time; it claims to give the genuine eternal values of all transitory experience, and to satisfy the thirst of the human heart, which can only be satisfied when it has found the God who made us for Himself. If Christianity is less than this, it is not what it claims to be; and other methods for reducing crime and equalising incomes will be found more efficacious.

The question "What is Christianity?" is thus one which we cannot answer fully, because Christianity is still unfolding itself, and has not yet reached its full growth. But we know enough both of the soil in which it was planted, and of the "seed" which was first sown in it, to enable us to distinguish, to a large extent, the essential and original parts of the Gospel of Christ. Enough, too, is known of the history of Christendom to enable us to recognise some at least of its fruits.

The immediate precursor of Christ's mission was the religious "revival" led by John the

Baptist. A preacher of righteousness, a voice denouncing the wrath to come, John revived in his own person the office of inspired prophet, which had lain dormant for centuries. What meaning he himself attached to his warning cry, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," it is difficult to say. The minds of the Jews were in a state of unrest and expectation, as we know even from foreign sources. They thought that *something* was going to happen, and hoped that it might involve the liberation of Judæa from the Roman yoke. For John the Baptist, the kingdom of heaven was to be the kingdom of a personal Messiah, one far greater than himself, whose advent he expected, and welcomed in the person of Jesus. It may well be that a large element of illusion entered into St John's prophetic vision, as into those of most prophets—that the actual kingdom, had he lived to see it, would have disappointed some of his hopes; but that he was a true forerunner of Christ is shown by his generous acceptance of a subordinate position so soon as our Lord's ministry began. Christ seems to have begun His public teaching by taking up St John's battle-cry—"The kingdom of heaven is at hand." The proclamation of His message was made in words borrowed from Isa. lxi.: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach

good tidings to the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." When John asked by messengers whether Jesus were the promised Messiah, our Lord replied indirectly, referring, in vindication of His commission, to the wonderful works of spiritual and perhaps physical healing which they might see wrought by His words. (It is impossible to say how much of the "things which ye hear and see" is to be understood metaphorically.) The "acceptable year of the Lord"—the advent of the kingdom of heaven — was the keynote of our Lord's teaching, at any rate during the earlier part of His ministry. If we may assume that St John gives us a true picture of His later teaching, which culminated in the weeks that preceded His Passion, we must conclude that this phrase, and the ideas which it conveyed, fell into the background as the end approached, and that "eternal life" to some extent took its place. It is not unlikely that Christ was at first sanguine of spiritualising the Messianic hope, so that it might be the foundation of the Gospel to the Jews, but that, as time went on, He found it impossible to liberate that idea from the political hopes which had gathered round it. The Evangelists have

preserved with admirable faithfulness the record of the psychological difficulties of His task. The moral and intellectual obtuseness of their questions and suggestions is astonishing. "What shall we have therefore?"—"Wilt thou call down fire from heaven?"—"Lord, here are two swords"—such are the speeches which have come down to us. We can only wonder that so much of the genuine teaching—of the true spirit of the Master—has been preserved by such unappreciative listeners. Much has probably been lost. When people hear an address which is far above their comprehension, the points which they will remember are not always those to which the speaker attaches most importance, and there will probably be an admixture of positive misunderstanding. There are a few passages in the Gospels which strike a jarring note, and which we can hardly believe to be authentic; we have a right to judge these by the standard of the narrative as a whole, and not to build much on what seems out of harmony with our Lord's character or method. These suspected passages are found chiefly in St Matthew, on which the final verdict may possibly be that it is an early second-century document, representing a later state of the tradition even than St Luke. The Johannine Christ may well be a truer historical picture than is often supposed. The deep congruity

between this portrait and those of the synoptists has long ago been settled by the Christian consciousness.

Can we then, bearing in mind the critical problems, not yet solved, and the doubts as to the competence of Christ's reporters, hope to disengage the "leaven" from the rest of the lump, so far as to recognise its main qualities? I think we can.

German theologians have rightly emphasised the "transvaluation of all values" as the essential part of Christ's teaching. The whole wisdom of life consists in setting the right prices upon things. The search for the highest good is a search for a standard by which all other goods may be weighed and classified. Very frequently, no doubt, the ostensible conclusion is really the starting-point. The philosopher has in view from the first a certain ethical type, and his arguments must somehow be made to converge upon this point. There is in most societies a fairly well-defined moral ideal which is admired and held up for imitation, and another set of values which is approximately accepted, and made the basis of purposive action, by the average man. In a society such as our own, the qualities most admired, in words, are active benevolence and kindliness, morality in private life, integrity in money matters, and disinterestedness. But the practical code, on

which most people act, can find but small room for disinterestedness. Its three chief goods are money, pleasure, and reputation, generally in that order; the higher motives act mainly as checks upon these three, setting limits to the expedients which we may employ to gain them. It is plain that a "transvaluation of values," in order to be effective, must alter both the ideal standard and the system of values generally adopted. Ethical systems are too often a scheme of the conduct which we should like others to exhibit in their dealings with us, or a sketch of the conditions which we should expect to prevail in Utopia. A great moral reformation can only come about when people are convinced that it is both desirable and practicable. This is why the direct influence of great thinkers has been so small. Before committing themselves to a new doctrine, involving the "transvaluation of all values," men need to be assured that it can be lived as well as believed—that their cheques on the new bank will somehow and somewhere be honoured.

The main topics of Christ's teaching, as we are now constantly reminded, were the Fatherhood of God and the Kingdom of God. In declaring the former truth, He took up the gentlest and purest teaching of the Old Testament, disengaging it from the proud and fierce nationalism which the Jews

had always mingled with it, and giving it a new extension and a new intensity. The revered name of the national God is heard no more; the God of the whole earth needs no personal designation. Instead of Jahweh, or "Lord" as a substitute for Jahweh, Christ in His prayers and exhortations spoke of "Abba"—spoke that tender Aramaic word in such tones that the memory and tradition of them lasted on in the early Church, so that Greek-speaking Christians continued to use it in their devotions. How fruitful the thought of this relationship is, in stimulating the best thoughts and feelings about God, is well known in our generation. Not only are we helped by it to realise the love and care and tender authority which God extends to us, the love and trust and loyal devotion which we ought to render to Him, but we are reminded that a Father is one who has imparted His own nature to His children, whose interests are their interests, who takes them into His confidence, and desires from them not unintelligent obedience but co-operation.

The conception of the Kingdom of God (or "the Kingdom of Heaven"—the phrase preferred in St Matthew), is hardly less important for an understanding of Christ's teaching. He did not repudiate the national hopes which had gathered round the phrase,

because He intended that those hopes, in which were concentrated most of the pure, unselfish, noble aspirations of His people, should be the soil out of which hopes yet purer, nobler, and more unselfish, should grow. The Kingdom of God, in the minds of the first disciples, has been a grand but vague conception, partly glorious, and partly wayward and wilful; it was developed, purified, and given a more definite form, by Jesus Christ. When we remember how far it was transmuted in His teaching, we cannot wonder that in our reports it seems to waver between present and future, visible and invisible, this world and heaven. The time and place and manner of the kingdom were all uncertain to the disciples; as indeed they are to us.

The conditions of entrance were clearly laid down. Conversion—the rebirth of the child's heart in the adult mind—is necessary. This involves a definite breach with the past, in those who are called from a non-Christian life. In those who have been brought up in a religious atmosphere, there is, as I said in an earlier lecture, no necessity for a dramatic, sudden conversion, nor can any authority be found in the New Testament for regarding an explosive ebullition of religious feeling as a normal, still less an essential, feature of spiritual growth. But the importance of *inwardness* cannot be overstated. The earlier

precepts of righteousness had been limited to the prohibition of overt transgressions, and Pharisaic legalism, while enormously multiplying the number of acts which were directly forbidden, tended more and more to neglect the state of the heart and will. Jesus spiritualised all the commandments, not in the sense that the outward act became indifferent, but that the guilt of transgression was extended to all treasonable correspondence with the tempter, even in thought. The value of moral action depends on its motive, so that a gift of two mites may under some circumstances be of more worth than a large sum. All outward performance not dictated by inner conviction He stigmatised as "acting." The "hypocrite" of the New Testament is not necessarily a Pecksniff; he is only one whose outward conduct is not the true and spontaneous expression of his inward state. A good "actor" really forgets himself in his part, and the typical religious "hypocrite" is by no means always a conscious impostor. The character of Bulstrode, in *Middlemarch*, is a particularly good example of the evil against which our Lord launched His sternest denunciations. To us, there may seem to be some lack of proportion in the severity of His strictures upon mere respectability. It is perhaps permissible to suspect that the second or third generation of Christians, who suffered

so much from the venomous hatred of the Jews, recorded all the "woes" passed upon Pharisees and lawyers with special pleasure. But the evil, against which our Lord contended so strenuously, was one which really cut at the root of all His teaching. Pharisaic "righteousness" introduced an alien and incongruous element into the relations between the believer and his God.

Our Lord's teaching about temporal evils is quite distinctive. To those who take His yoke upon them, and learn from Him meekness and submission, all other burdens will seem easy and light. He promises that they shall not really suffer by seeking first His kingdom and righteousness. It would be a mistake to suppose that this is the Stoic declaration of independence: that Christ would have us despise all earthly goods as *ἀδιάφορα*. There has always been a sanity and positivism in Jewish thought which has kept it free from such extravagances. Our Lord most distinctly promises that the meek shall inherit the earth, which He explains to mean that God will provide His children with those things which He knows us to be in need of—food and drink and clothing. We are forbidden to be anxious and unhappy about such things, because anxiety is unnecessary. He does not say with the Psalmist that the individual righteous man is *never* reduced to

extreme poverty—that would be untrue; but He does say that those who take His yoke upon them and follow His precepts shall find it possible to lead healthy and happy lives in this present time. We must remember that every Jew has to follow some definite occupation; there is not a syllable in the New Testament to encourage either idleness or improvidence. But the world says, "You must either *serve* Mammon, or be in danger of starvation." Our Lord promises that there is and shall be no such necessity.

But while He releases us from the obligation to be always thinking about our livelihood, He neither promises us worldly prosperity, nor even holds out such prosperity as a thing to be desired. On the contrary, the man who thinks that life consists in superfluous possessions is a "fool," and folly, in the mouth of a Jew, is a word of comprehensive moral condemnation. As a matter of experience, the man who is burdened with superfluous wealth hardly ever "enters into the kingdom of God"; he is too much preoccupied. In many cases, he really has not time both to guard his wealth and save his soul. A millionaire once complained that he had to work eight hours a day "to keep off the rascals" who wished to rob him. It is easy to see that such a daily occupation is neither enviable in itself nor conducive to elevation of character.

It is also a central doctrine of Christ that suffering has a moral value. Through pain comes gain; death is the gate of life.

"God draws a cloud over each gleaming morn;
Would you know why?
Is it because all noblest things are born
In agony.
Only upon a Cross of pain and woe
God's Son must lie;
Each soul redeemed from sin and death must know
Its Calvary."[1]

Those who have said that the core of Christianity lies in the text "Whosoever willeth to save his soul shall lose it, and whosoever is willing to lose his soul for my sake, shall find it," are quite right. Just as our Lord Himself passed into glory through the gate of death, so we must lose all to gain all. Complete self-surrender, both once for all and daily in detail, is the condition of salvation. Presentations of Christianity, which ignore or repudiate this law, are not only defective but radically false. They are built on "another foundation," not on the Crucified. "Some of you they shall kill and crucify: and there shall not a hair of your head perish. In your endurance ye shall gain possession of your souls." Such is the paradox of which the Crucifixion and Resurrection are the sacrament.

[1] Frances P. Cobbe.

We realise what a paradox it is, when we try to *act* on it. The world is not yet convinced, and therefore is not yet Christian. Large sections of the population frankly set it on one side, and adopt instead the ethics of the predatory animal, or of the wolf pack. Others, like some ignoble insect parasite, are content if they can find a place where they can hang on and suck. Politicians assume that private interest and class interest and national rivalry are the only springs of action that need be seriously considered as affecting votes. They direct their eloquence either straight to the great stomach of the people, or to stimulate national pride and pugnacity. Moreover, our philanthropic activities are sub-Christian. Christian Socialism is in difficulties because our socialism is, for the most part, simply individualism run mad. We bribe the poor to come to church by doles and pensions and parish treats, till the self-respecting working-man is ashamed to have anything to do with us. And over our own lives the shadow of Mammon is cast, destroying the light-hearted joy and contentment which our Lord meant to be ours as a compensation for having to bear the Cross.

Does the sketch given above cover in outline the whole of Christ's religion? Is Christianity comprised in the good news about the Fatherhood and Kingdom of God, and in the

maxim "die to live"? What are we to think about the doctrines of Christ's Person which have played so important a part in the history of Christianity? Are we to set them on one side as an alien accretion, as an invasion of Greek metaphysics, which destroyed the simplicity of the Gospel? Are we to agree with the Ritschlian school that the gospel, as Jesus Christ proclaimed it, has to do with the Father only, and not with the Son?

It seems to me that the antithesis between the Person of Christ and doctrines about Him is a false one. The human mind, as Cardinal Newman says in his *Essay on Development*, conceives by definition and description; it cannot take in an object simply and integrally. The emptiness of the Ritschlian conception of Christ is the natural result of refusing to consider any "doctrines about Him." Moreover, this school has to admit that the Christian Church took a false step of the utmost importance at the very outset of her career. For if Ritschl is right, not only is the Fourth Gospel a misleading fiction, but Pauline Christianity is also on the wrong track. The treatment of St Paul's theology by writers of this school is almost disingenuous. They entirely suppress the Pauline doctrine of mystical union with *Christ*, and would have us believe that, in St Paul's Epistles, Christ only brings us to the Father.

They also ignore those numerous passages, in which the *cosmical* aspect of Christ's Person, as the Agent in Creation, and the life-giving Power through whom all things are maintained in being, is plainly taught. These doctrines are no adventitious portions of St Paul's theology; they are its deepest and most essential part. We can strip off the polemic against Judaism and the controversy about justification by the works of the law; but the "I, yet not I, for Christ liveth in me"; "Christ is all, and in all"—are cardinal doctrines, which have nothing to do with the controversies of the time. The mystical union with the glorified Christ is the very foundation of St Paul's Christianity. There is no real difference between this and the Logos-doctrine of the Fourth Gospel. St John teaches the pre-existence of Christ as a Divine Person, "before the world was," and asserts, in the Prologue and elsewhere, His activity in the world before the Incarnation. The Johannine Christ also promises that the gift of the Holy Spirit shall be a real continuance of the Incarnation. The Incarnation without the Holy Spirit is incomplete. Although the Word of God could only become articulate to man by assuming a human body, it could never be completely intelligible to the disciples while their Master was before their eyes. It

was expedient that He should go away, for only on this condition could the Paraclete come among them. Just as Jesus came to reveal the Father, so the Paraclete will reveal Jesus, and carry on His work in the world. The Divine presence in the hearts of believers will be quite as real as the bodily presence of the Word made Flesh in Galilee and Judæa. And this presence is indifferently described in the New Testament as "Christ," "the Spirit," "the Spirit of Jesus," "the Spirit of the Son," "the Spirit of God," and as "God." Those who wish to investigate the doctrine of the Trinity in the New Testament should begin by collecting all the passages bearing on the Divine indwelling. Communion with God in the New Testament is not, as in the Old, a conversation of one person with another, but an infusion of new life by the Spirit. And this Spirit is formally identified (as regards its operations) with the Spirit of the glorified Christ, and with the Spirit of God.

It is the fatal defect of Ritschlianism that it leaves all this side of Christianity out of account. It leaves Christ no place in His own gospel. It is astonishing that clear thinkers should fail to see the profound truth and value of the idea of the Divine Logos, which underlies all the doctrine of the *unio mystica*. The Logos-idea proclaims the *unity* of the supreme principles of nature, thought,

and morality, and declares that this unity constitutes the Deity Himself in action. It includes in its scope the natural sciences, philosophy, and ethics, and by declaring the Logos fully Divine it gives reality and value to the time-process, which is the sphere of the distinct activities of the Second Person in the Trinity. It is the only religious philosophy which links together the Christ of history and the Christ of experience, by proclaiming that the indwelling Power, which inspires all our best thoughts and actions, is the same Spirit which breathed through every deed and word of Jesus Christ. It gives us confidence that we are in very truth in communication with Him, and He with us. It saves us from the great philosophical difficulty about the direct relations of the soul with God the Father, who, except on this hypothesis, can hardly fail to be regarded as a Spirit among other spirits, a limited, struggling God who is not God at all. Christ is not only the way to the Father, but the truth and the life. As the supreme cosmic principle, His mind is the deepest law of the whole universe; as its all-pervading and all-sustaining life He leaves traces of His presence everywhere, though not *equally* everywhere. The throne of His Divinity is the human mind.

The complaint that Christianity has been corrupted by Greek influences is not very

wise. Christianity is inconceivable as a mere product of Judaism. Rather it represents a fusion between two great currents of religious thought, the theocratic, which was the Semitic religion, and the theanthropic, which was that of the Greeks. No violence was done to the religion of Christ by this development; on the contrary it then first showed its ability to become a world-religion, the creed of East and West. The maxim, "Back to Christ," though in one sense wholesome, is in another sense an impossible demand. To the Christ who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, we must continually return. From Him flow all the fresh springs of our spiritual life. And since, if we are Christians, we are assured of the identity of this cosmic Christ, the Logos of God, with the spirit that tabernacled in Jesus of Nazareth, we can often correct prevailing tendencies in religion by referring them back to the standard in the Gospels. But we cannot retrace our steps in the manner sometimes advocated. We cannot reproduce the Christianity of the first century, for the plain reason that eighteen centuries of Christian life have passed between that time and this. We can no more root out Hellenism from our religion than from our literature; and if we could, the residuum would not be Christianity.

The true answer to the question "What is

Christianity?" is to be sought in two or three well-marked lines of investigation. First, we must study the character of Christ, and His teaching about God and His own Person, in all four Gospels. But here we must remember that, as I have already said, Jesus was far above His reporters. We cannot be sure that every speech has been accurately reported, and that nothing of importance has been forgotten or misunderstood. And in treating the Fourth Gospel as first hand evidence, we must remember that whoever composed it was deliberately writing a "spiritual" Gospel, that is, a document in which particular facts were very freely handled in the attempt to present a true though idealised portrait. The four Gospels, taken together, give us a very clear picture of our Lord, which we may safely take as trustworthy; but we are not justified in building much on isolated sayings which are not plainly in agreement with the general portraiture.

Secondly, we have as evidence the history of mankind during the last two thousand years. Of course we can only dip here and there into so vast a mass of material; and even if we could obtain an impartial record of the world's history, emphasising the really important parts, we should have to remember that as a picture of Christianity it would be most imperfect, because the greater part of

the history of Christianity is in the unknown future. But it is possible to draw some comparisons between the various types of Christian civilisation and the civilisation of Mohammedan, Buddhist, or pagan countries. We may thus form some conclusions as to the kind of character which Christianity tends to foster, and the way in which it affects different national types. We may study Christian ethics in the light of history, and the different aspects of truth which are displayed in Catholicism and Protestantism. We may study such "movements" as Christian Platonism at Alexandria, the German Mysticism of the Middle Ages, the Reformation and counter Reformation, Deism and the rationalistic *Aufklärung*, Methodism, and the revived Catholicism of the nineteenth century.

Thirdly, the lives of Christian saints furnish evidence of immense practical value. It is true that no single character has ever reproduced all the traits of moral perfection that we find in Jesus Christ. It is true that some of the greatest saints exhibit manifest imperfections. But by putting their biographies together, and allowing them to supplement each other, we gain the great advantage of seeing how the Christian ideal may be applied to conditions very unlike those of Palestine in our Lord's time. Of course we are at the mercy of our authorities; but if the biography

is contemporary, or nearly so, with the subject, the *impression* at any rate of the character is probably faithfully conveyed; and the recorded sayings, acts, and writings of the saint will help us to a clear view of his character. The study should cover a wide range. The lives of St Francis of Assisi and Savonarola should certainly be included; and there are several quite modern biographies which depict the growth of a beautiful character under religious influences. These concrete examples will help us to understand what Christianity really is, better than the broad generalisations of historians. When the biography shows us the private life as well as the public, the domestic relations, the intercourse with friends, the hopes, fears, anxieties, resolutions only confided, perhaps, to a private diary, we have a real human document in which the soul of a Christian is laid bare to us. If, in addition to this, we are fortunate enough to be brought into intimate companionship with a saintly character, the value of our studies will be greatly increased. The true saint radiates influences which are most strongly felt by those who are in immediate contact with him; the best biography can only reproduce part of the real man. Our Lord Himself chose as the vehicle of His message, not pen and ink, but personal influence. He committed His gospel to twelve persons, selected for the purpose, in

well-grounded confidence that the effect of three years' close intercourse with Himself would be strong enough to send His message ringing through the ages and to the uttermost parts of the earth. "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that which this woman hath done shall be told for a memorial of her." None of the immortals of literature—none of the great Latin poets, assured as they were of the permanence of their language and their empire, not Shakespeare himself, has expressed so sublime a confidence that "the wreckful siege of battering days" cannot touch their work:—and no confidence has ever been so fully justified. It is, then, by personal influence—by handing on *quasi cursores, vitai lampada*, that men must chiefly keep alight the holy fire from the altar of God.

I have enlarged upon this topic because, in this country at least, we do not attach quite enough weight to *authority* in personal religion. It is often said that inner convictions are not transferable, and are only valid for him who feels them. But this needs qualification. The authority of a great poet or musician or painter is acknowledged by the world at large, within the limits of his art. The maxim *cuique in sua arte credendum est* applies to religion as well as to art. There is an inner logic of the saintly life which cannot

be fully analysed, but which deserves respectful attention. Religion, as John Smith, the Cambridge Platonist, says, is a Divine life, not a Divine science; and a *life* cannot be turned into a book. Let us then remember, in this application as well as in others, the beautiful words of Tertullian, "When thou seest thy brother, thou seest thy Lord."

VI.

PROBLEMS AND TASKS

THERE is a well-known picture of Albert Dürer, which represents a female figure sitting in the midst of scrolls and scientific instruments, and immersed in sad thoughts. It is inscribed "Melencolia." The picture has seemed to some to be emblematic of modern civilisation, disillusioned of its hope and faith by the new knowledge. George Romanes, in the days before he recovered his belief, speaks of "the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of the creed which once was mine, and the lonely mystery of existence as now I find it." He was almost tempted, he says, to commit treason against his beloved science, and to accept, as the last word of philosophy, not "know thyself," but "the terrific oracle to Œdipus, 'Mayest thou never know the truth of what thou art.'" Mr Austin Dobson's Prayer of the Swine to

Circe illustrates this sad feeling that ignorance may be bliss :

"If swine we be—if we indeed be swine,
Daughter of Perse, make us swine indeed,
Well pleased on litter straw to lie supine,
Well pleased on mast and acorn shales to feed,
Stirred by all instincts of the bestial breed ;
But O Unmerciful ! O Pitiless !
Leave us not thus with sick men's hearts to bleed !
To waste long days in yearning, dumb distress
And memory of things gone, and utter hopelessness."

This sadness must come when old things are passing away. The fruit of the tree of knowledge always expels us from some paradise, once a Garden of Eden, but henceforth only a paradise of fools. The whole story in Genesis ii. and iii. seems to be a parable of the sorrow with which mankind surrenders the "childish things" of his early experience. But it is a mood, not a permanent condition. Romanes outgrew it. Matthew Arnold lived to write a palinode to his first "Obermann," and to see

"One common wave of thought and joy
Lifting mankind again."

Perhaps it is only the prophetic eye that can see so bright a vision as this ; but as regards the religious upheaval wrought by the new knowledge, the worst is over. We

have almost forgotten the terror of a godless universe, which was inspired in the first generation who read Darwin and Huxley. The outstanding questions between Religion and Science are important enough, but they are not fundamental. We need no longer complain, with Mary Magdalene, that "they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

It is convenient to use "Science" for the philosophy which is dominant among naturalists, though the name may easily be misleading. Natural Science, as I have said before, does not deal with ultimate reality, and only enters into competition with Religion when it is made the basis of a theory. Such a theory is that which is sometimes called naturalism and sometimes monism, though there is no reason why a monistic theory of the world should be naturalistic. The controversy between dogmatic Christianity and naturalistic "monism" is commonly spoken of as "the conflict between Religion and Science," and we may as well keep to the familiar terms.

I wish in this lecture to consider briefly the problem which is presented by the present relations of Religion and Science; and I shall take as the spokesman of Science Professor Hæckel, whose popular book, *The Riddle of the Universe*, has had an enormous

sale. He is an acknowledged authority on biology, he has strong convictions, and is an uncompromising opponent of the Church. His arguments may therefore be regarded as representative of the scientific case against Christianity.

The book has caused, among many orthodox readers, an amount of dismay and indignation which is not justified by its contents. Hæckel's real enemy is not Christianity, but the organisation which sends an ultramontane majority to the German Reichstag. A man who believes heartily in the value of a scientific education very naturally objects to seeing the home politics of his country dictated by the Vatican, and the result of the *Cultur-kampf* was enough to frighten a German Liberal as to the prospects of secular teaching in the Fatherland. Hæckel's "monism" is a creed hostile to later developments of Christianity, but not to Christ. He regards it as potentially at once the perfect science and the perfect religion. It is his own creed, which appeals as strongly to his ethical and emotional faculties as to his intellect. Let us examine his own confession of belief.

Truth, he holds, is only to be found by critical observation of, and reflection upon, the laws of nature. This alone gives us "a clear unified view of the world," as opposed to supernaturalistic dualism. The ethics of

"monism" coincide for the most part with the Christian idea of virtue, though not with the "Vatican caricature" of pure Christianity. There are, however, some qualifications. Christianity, he thinks, insists too much on altruism, and denounces egoism too vehemently; monism, which bases the feeling of duty not on any illusory categorical imperative, but on social instinct, finds perfect virtue in the just balance of the love of self and love of one's neighbour. Moreover, Christianity is a world-renouncing creed; while it is consistent with itself, it rejects art and beauty, and inculcates an ascetic morality which outrages human nature. The botanical and zoological specimens collected by modern naturalists afford, he courageously asserts, a better inspiration for art than the sacred legends of the Middle Ages. Lastly, Christianity deprives this world of its interest by its doctrine of a future life. Monism, therefore, is the religion of the future; and though its votaries will need no "narrow enclosed place" to worship in, some of them may like to have "decorated temples" for this purpose, in which case they will take the churches of the Catholics.

The chapters, of which the foregoing paragraph is a summary, may be taken as expressing the *gravamen* of Science against Christianity. Let us consider the counts of

the indictment in turn. Christianity, he thinks, presents us with a world governed partly by natural law, and partly by supernatural interventions, whereas in truth natural law is supreme. This is possibly valid against forms of Christianity which give a large place to "supernatural phenomena," miracles in fact, which are believed to be of frequent occurrence. But Christianity, as we understand it, is not committed to the theory of occasional intervention. The majority of Churchmen believe that miraculous events attended the birth of Christianity; but there is a tendency to try to find room even for these as the orderly working of Divine law; and we have no wish at all to reserve a class of apparently uncaused phenomena as "acts of God." We only demur when we are told that the order of nature, from top to bottom, must necessarily be mechanical. If the whole scheme is the orderly working out of a consistent plan, in which every detail is directed to one end, it must necessarily *appear* to be a mechanism. There is no breach in the order of events, of cause and effect, not because there is no will behind them, but because that will is constantly in operation.

The ethical objection is avowedly against the teaching of Christians, not against the teaching of Christ. Our golden rule is the

golden rule for Hæckel also; but he thinks that the Church has tried to improve it into "thou shalt love thy neighbour and not thyself." No doubt there have been Christians who seem to think that every Christian ought to be sick nurse to somebody else; but if the duty of self-love is not much insisted on in Christian teaching, it is on account of a well-founded suspicion that the self-regarding instincts may be trusted to take care of themselves. Asceticism, in the sense of self-chosen pain or privation, as a religious exercise, is no invention of Christianity, and is not encouraged by it except as a special discipline. The teaching of our Lord about food and clothes is: "Be not anxious about them, for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." The outward conditions which He considers most conducive to spiritual health are not privation and misery, but moderate poverty, in which the necessaries of life are secure. As for art, it has owed some of its most exquisite developments to religious feeling, while the taste for it is generally lost by those who devote themselves very earnestly to scientific studies. The charge of "otherworldliness" I hope to deal with presently.

The most serious accusation, I think, which can be plausibly brought against Christianity from the side of science is that it encourages

a sentimental humanitarianism which is unfavourable to racial progress. This side of the anti-Christian case is well stated by Cotter Morison in his *Service of Man*, and, in a brilliant but violent manner, by Nietzsche. It is too large a question to discuss here, but while I admit that, in practice, Christian charity has *not* accepted the maxim that prevention is better than cure, I do not see any reason why it should always be so. I cannot see that the principles of Christianity favour a policy of weak benevolence, or prescribe gentle remedies for diseases which demand the knife.

I very strongly deprecate the use of words like atheism and infidelity to describe the attitude of the average scientific student towards religion. Men like Huxley, Tyndall, and Hæckel were neither atheists nor infidels. On the contrary, they are earnest preachers of a religion which they believe to be both true and precious. Their religion has affinities with the austere creed of the Stoics, and even with Calvinism. It has its noble side, when it is taken, as it ought to be, at its best. It has the merit of trying to build on facts, not fancies. It will not beg a crust which it cannot earn: it will rather fight the world starving than beg or steal ideal hopes and baseless beliefs.[1] Consider the following words

[1] Wallace, *Lectures and Essays*, p. 138.

of Huxley, and say whether they are not obviously sincere, and genuinely religious: "Science seems to me to teach in the highest and strongest manner the great truth which is embodied in the Christian conception of entire surrender to the will of God. Sit down before facts as a little child, follow humbly wherever nature leads, or you shall learn nothing." "In moments of self-questioning, I feel that I can say that the real pleasure (of my work) lies in the feeling of self-development—in the sense of power and of growing oneness with the great spirit of abstract truth."[1] To make this passage Christian, we need only supplement it from St Augustine: "Where I found truth, there I found my God, who is the truth itself."[2] In its early struggles with orthodoxy, science was contending for the right to exist; this secured, its fundamentally religious character and desire to convert the world to its principles, become manifest. One of the struggles of the future will be between this religion of science, which, though ethical in its ends, is purely intellectual in its methods, and the organised religion of "the Churches," which is swayed principally by the emotions. The conflict will divide the political world also into two camps, for there is hardly a burning question in politics that is not answered differently by the intellect and

[1] Huxley's *Life and Letters*. [2] *Conf.*, x. 24.

by the emotions. I hope, however, that there will be an educated religious class which will mediate between the two parties, and help them to understand each other. If my analysis of the religious faculty is right, religion ought to do justice both to the claims of the intellect and to those of the heart; and those who are able to appreciate both sides of the truth should try to make the two parties understand each other. The rapidly expanding study of psychology may supply a common field of study.

At the same time, we must protest against the assumption that natural science, "systematised, unified, and completed," is the creed of the intellect. The disparagement of metaphysics by some physicists is, to speak plainly, the result of mere ignorance and a bad education. The "creed of science" which is often presented to us consists, as Mr Tennant has very well said, of "a sandwich of genuine science between two thick layers of metaphysic, the lower of which consists of presuppositions concerning reality taken over from the language and thought of unreflective 'common sense,' and the upper of generalisations attained by scientific research and illogically identified with universally valid principles."[1] Mr Tennant shows that in the

[1] Cambridge *Theological Essays*, p. 60.

last thirty or forty years the philosophy of science has been moving away from materialism towards either "neutral" or spiritualistic monism. The controversy between these two is still undecided. Dr Ward's polemic against agnostic monism, the Spencerian position, is or should be familiar to a Cambridge audience. If he is right, some kind of spiritualism, such as Lotze's, holds the field. And Lotze was a Christian. The hesitation which scientific men feel about accepting spiritualistic idealism is not due to want of good will. They do not *wish* to deify the natural order as it is: some of them, like Huxley, are ready to declare war against it. If we can convince them that they are mythologizing when they endow nature, the blameless monster, with an inhuman soul, when they eulogise its innocent crimes, and worship its blind energies, they will thank us. But they will not thank us unless we can convince them.

I think, then, that Christianity has nothing to fear from science, unless we refuse to learn from it. We ought to be able to assimilate its message, for it has a message; otherwise, it will have enough of the truth on its side to be a dangerous rival.

There is, however, another problem, or set of problems, which I will call collectively the problem of Christianity and civilisation.

It is an old dispute, whether Christianity is

or is not a world-renouncing creed. Many more or less accidental causes retarded the direct application of Christian principles to social institutions. Until the fourth century Christianity was a persecuted sect; and when it was able to legislate, the ascetic and monastic movement, the strangest aberration in its history, was in full force. Patriotism was swallowed up in loyalty to the Church, which succeeded in enlisting the enthusiasm that Christians could hardly feel for the Roman Empire. In modern times, Catholicism has been afraid of democracy, of education, and of free discussion, and has tried to check all three. But all this has not much to do with "otherworldliness." The three causes of asceticism seem to be the desire to be independent of externals; the real necessity for severe discipline amid the temptations of a lonely life; and the desire to induce, by fasting and other austerities, the mystical trance, which can be brought about in this manner. There is a difference between Christianity and Buddhism in their attitudes towards this world. The true logic of a religion shows itself in the type of civilisation which it fosters; and Christianity has proved far more congenial to the practical, energetic, world-subduing European than to the contemplative quietistic Asiatic.

Is it true to say that Christianity, instead

of trying to ameliorate the conditions of life on this planet, has "called a new world into existence to redress the balance of the old"? Is that the true reading of the parable of Dives and Lazarus? Are the poor and miserable maintained in their wretchedness as objects for Christian charity to exercise itself upon, while they are consoled by promises of "solid comforts" (to quote a hymn said to be popular with some sects) "when they die"? The question involves the whole Christian doctrine of the "other world."

The hope of immortality has no necessary connexion with religion. The brute instinct of self-preservation causes us to rebel against the thought of extinction. Many of us like to fancy that somehow or other we shall survive in much the same condition as that in which we now are. We transfer to "heaven" as much as possible of the apparatus of life on earth. Some even like to fancy their disembodied spirits frequenting their old haunts, and perhaps even "appearing" to their surviving friends. This kind of hope or belief has nothing to do with religion. It is essentially wilful and frivolous; and those who think they are defending religion by dabbling in spiritualism must have a strange idea of what religion means. The crude doctrine of compensation is also irreligious. What is meant by saying that the good are miserable in this

life? Is it, says Emerson, "that houses and lands, offices, wine, horses, dress, luxury, are had by unprincipled men, whilst the saints are poor and despised; and that a compensation is to be made to these last hereafter, by giving them the like gratifications another day—bank stock and doubloons, venison and champagne? This must be the compensation intended; for what else? Is it that they may have leave to pray and praise? to love and serve men? Why, that they can do now." Emerson goes on to urge that if we give things their true value, we shall find that justice is not deferred; that we cannot do wrong without suffering wrong; that the thief steals from himself; that every one is loved just as much as he loves. Emerson's gospel is an idealisation and justification of earthly life by a drastic transformation of its values, and, I am afraid, by averting his eyes (as Matthew Arnold says of Wordsworth) "from half of human fate." It makes future rewards and punishments unnecessary, and practically denies the ethical claim for a future existence. In this it is ultra-Christian, and is not in accordance either with the facts of experience or with the real demands of the moral consciousness. But it is much nearer to the truth than the crude compensation doctrine which we hear preached sometimes.

What we call the future life is both more

and less mixed up with our present life than is commonly realised. We are obliged to represent it to ourselves in terms of temporal existence; we cannot help describing it in words borrowed from natural things. We give it a place—the place we call heaven, though in the spiritual world there is no space. We give it a time, and speak of its endless duration, but when "there shall be time no longer," there can be no such thing as duration. We give it substance by contrasting it with the "vain shadows" of earth; but if we ever really succeed in reducing the world of our experience to a vain shadow, the "substance" which we seek to grasp vanishes into thin air. These three modes of picturing the spiritual or ideal world are, as I have said, merely representative and symbolic, the third as well as the first and second. I do not trust the intellectualist tendency to discard the spatial and temporal presentations in favour of the Platonic conception of a higher reality eternally present. The spatial and temporal images have their own value, which is lost if we only think of heaven as the ideal world, the everlasting Now. Indeed, as I said in a former lecture, the *moral* consciousness finds in the ideas of a *future* judgment and a *past* redemption a truer presentment of what it believes and demands than in the more philo-

sophical concepts of appearance and reality. It is in no way necessary that we should force ourselves to believe in the literal truth of the popular eschatology. It does not profess to be literally true, and we have every reason to think that no revelation of the literal truth could possibly be made to creatures in our condition. What we may hope to arrive at is a somewhat clearer idea of the mutual relations of this world and the other, which are presented to us under these necessary figures.

Reality is the content of the mind and will of God. As His creatures appear to Him, so they are. And since He is above time and space, He sees the life of each of His creatures in its whole meaning and result, not obliterating the distinctions of here and there, past, present, and future, but viewing the parts as constituent elements in a complete whole. Every moment, therefore, every incident in the time-life of a moral being, has, in God's sight, two aspects. Viewed temporally, it is an occurrence, an unique fact contrasted with all other facts. Viewed eternally, it is linked with the whole order of God's thought and purpose, and more particularly with the eternal existence, the eternal quality and character, of the moral being who experiences it. The *meaning* of each life, in which its individuality consists, is our eternal

self, of which we have a flickering consciousness during our earthly life. This *meaning* is linked with the life of God Himself, and our consciousness of immortality consists in our consciousness of, and expression of, this meaning. One of the most illuminating of moral aphorisms is that which asserts that our rank in the scale of being depends entirely on the objects in which we are interested. If we "lose ourselves" in interests which perish in the using, in bestial gratifications, in empty petty excitements, in selfish schemings, there is nothing of our conscious life which is fit to survive or capable of surviving; we are self-excluded from the glorious inheritance which God intended for us, and our "frustrate ghost" must suffer such penalties of discipline and of deprivation as God may see fit to assign to us. But if we throw ourselves whole-heartedly into the service of such things as are true, noble, pure, just, and of good report, we shall have our treasure in heaven, where the patterns of these things eternally dwell; we shall draw our life-breath in an atmosphere which no taint of corruption and decay can ever infect: our life will be hid with Christ in God, where the death of the body is seen to be a thing indifferent, or rather the gate into a fuller and richer life; we shall realise the philosophic ideal of being "eternal in the midst of time," without giving up the

hope of a more blessed future. For even as time has been truly said to be "the form of the will," the ethical faculty, the will, can place no temporal limit to its activities: it cannot contemplate or admit the possibility of any future moment at which it can say, "my task is done." A future life is at least as real as time is real. The difficulties about it are difficulties which infect the form of time generally, and which have led some thinkers to the conclusion that it cannot be an ultimate reality. They are not difficulties which should lead us to the conclusion that we now are, but shall soon cease to be.

I think that if we read St John carefully, and compare what is there said about time and eternity with other parts of the New Testament, we shall be convinced that the doctrine which I have tried to express in the last paragraph is in accordance with the teaching of Christianity. It is a doctrine which imparts the greatest solemnity and importance to the passing hour, but which forbids us to regard the past as lost and done with. It compels us to live strenuously in time, but not for time; it bids to set our affections on things above, but not to seek to "flee away and be at rest" before God calls us. The earthly portion of our immortal lives has its function to discharge, its "little human praise" which God would miss if He heard it

not.[1] There is a work for each season, in the spiritual as in the natural order. And our whole earthly life must have a meaning, a seasonal function, in the history of our souls, which if lost is lost for ever. God would not have placed us under such conditions, with all these screens and veils between us and reality, with all that is best in us living on trust, unless this was necessary for our final ripening. The fact that everything in our earthly life points heavenwards, and that only as leading up to, and passing into, that celestial future, can we understand rightly the most trivial experience of the present, is not a reason for neglecting, but for reverencing the things of time. There are temporal experiences in the moral life, which can hardly form part of our future existence: these must be practised and done justice to now, or never. And among these are just those offices to our fellow-men, and to secular society, which Christianity has been falsely accused of undervaluing.[2]

"Otherworldliness," then, in the invidious sense, is no part of our religion. Christianity has never been content with a *civitas Dei* up in the clouds. In one form or another it has

[1] The reference is to Browning's poem: *The Boy and the Angel.*

[2] In this paragraph I am indebted to a remarkable sermon by the Rev. J. H. Thom.

striven to reproduce on earth a copy of "the things showed in the mount." And yet those social reformers who think that humanity could be regenerated by an eight hours day, or state-ownership of land, or the socialism of the "Fabian Essays," are right when they complain that the Church offers them but little direct support. Our Lord indicated the right attitude of His Church when He refused to interfere in a family quarrel about ownership. He did not come to be a "Judge and Divider" in such matters, nor did He ever intend His Church to assume these duties. The complete transvaluation of values, of which I spoke in my last lecture, takes all the bitterness, and much of the eagerness, out of economic controversy. Our Lord would have said, without any feeling that He was uttering a paradox, that the only class whose economic state is truly pitiable is that of the millionaires. He would not have considered it a wrong or an injury to deprive the very rich of their superfluous wealth; but neither would He have considered it at all an important question whether an artizan should receive six shillings a day or eight.

The reason why Christianity, when it is true to its own principles, seems so lukewarm in social and political reform, is not that it considers temporal welfare a thing indifferent,

but because it has its own view as to how it may be secured for all. Steady, self-denying industry, absolute honesty in all our dealings, a preference for co-operation over competition, a general willingness to bear each other's burdens, a very simple, though not harshly austere, rule of expenditure ; a healthy mode of life, secured by temperance and cheerfulness and banishment of dull care—such is the programme of social reform which may claim to be essentially Christian. The riches which it offers are those mental and spiritual gifts which enrich the possessor and his neighbours alike ; which are capable of indefinite increase, and which can neither decay nor be taken away from us.

Does this conception of the relation of Christianity to politics leave us with no definite social programme? I am far from thinking so. Avarice, luxury, intemperance, immorality, betting and gambling, corruption in public life and in commerce—all these evils, and others that might be mentioned, are sufficiently definite and sufficiently formidable to give the Christian reformer plenty of work to do. We may have, and we ought to have, a clear idea of the kingdom of God on earth, in which the will of God will be done as it is in heaven. The New Testament has furnished us with at least an outline of such a blessed community, and it is in the power of

all of us to do something to bring its realisation a little nearer.

I have now finished my task in these lectures. I have tried to present Christianity to you as the true and natural culmination of a long process of religious development, the consummation of the long upward striving of the human spirit. I have tried to distinguish between the essential features of the religion, and the more or less morbid changes which it has undergone from time to time. I have shown how, in the individual, the growth of the religious life follows the same laws as in the race, and that the religion of the mature mind, in which all the faculties, intellect, will, and feeling, are disciplined and consecrated to their highest uses, is the religion of Christ. I have tried to face honestly the outstanding difficulties about faith and fact, and have warned you against some methods of adjusting them which I believe to be unsound and dangerous. Then I proceeded to discuss the religion of Jesus Christ, which though it is "a divine life rather than a divine science," nevertheless implies a doctrine about the Person of its Founder. I have begged you not to throw on one side the Logos-doctrine of St John, which is also substantially that of St Paul, but to find in it a precious link between Christian theology and the spiritualistic monism which is the creed of

many thoughtful men of science. Lastly, in my address to-day I have discussed two present-day problems of great importance—the relation of Christianity to natural science and to civilisation.

I know that there is, and must be, a great deal of scepticism at Cambridge. The atmosphere of a university is one of enquiry and investigation rather than of fixed and settled views. It is right that it should be so. Critical examination of the foundations and superstructure of belief is a work which must be done thoroughly, and no place is so suitable for this necessary labour as a university. It is unfortunate, but inevitable, that some honest young minds should be temporarily unsettled, and torn loose from their moorings, by coming into such a society. The scepticism of the maturing mind is, as I have tried to show, a proof neither of intellectual acuteness nor of moral depravity. It is a natural phase, which will probably give way to some consistent outlook upon life, some practical working faith. I have expressed my conviction that this faith, if it be sound, must be religious, and must be, in fact if not in name, Christian. To those who cannot yet follow me as far as this, I would say: if you cannot say the Church's creeds, cannot you say her prayers? If you cannot worship Jesus Christ, cannot you reverence and try to imitate Him?

If you are doubtful whether Christian ethics have any supernatural sanction, cannot you accept them as the highest product of the human spirit? Do not try to force yourselves to make admissions about Christ which are not heartfelt. Christ Himself was not exacting in this respect. He condemned those who should say "Lord, Lord," without obeying His precepts, but He has no words of blame for lovers of righteousness and seekers after truth who should do Him no personal homage. The unpardonable sin is not failure to recognise the Divinity of the Son of Man; it is treason against the Spirit of love, of truth, of purity. Orthodoxy may wait; but the following in the footsteps of Christ must not be deferred. Do you ask for your guide's credentials? I answer: they have been accumulating for eighteen hundred years. The young are prone to undervalue the stored experience of the race. In matters of conduct, especially, authority should carry great weight. Many of the ruinous blunders made by the young are due to this despising of moral authority, which is based on better reasons than it can always produce. St John, who was certainly no obscurantist, records the profound saying that "whosoever willeth to do His will shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." We must begin with faith, which is simply the resolution to stand or fall

by the noblest hypothesis. "Voluntarily to follow what is good," says Clement of Alexandria, "is the first requisite for understanding it." Such a faith, as the same writer says, will never be idle or isolated, but will always go hand in hand with enquiry. We ascend to the Lord by faith, knowledge, and love, of which the first and last cannot be *taught* (*τὰ ἄκρα οὐ διδάσκεται*). "The first saving change is from heathenism to faith; the second from faith to knowledge; and knowledge, as it passes into love, begins to establish a mutual friendship between the knower and the known. Perhaps he who has arrived at this stage is already equal with the angels." Yes, that will be our final demonstration of truth in religion, when that can be said of us which was said of Moses: "The Lord spake with him as a man speaketh unto his friend."

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